

Starring God: Hollywood's box office hit



page 35

Christmas tips cost me \$1,000



Joarna Coles page 19

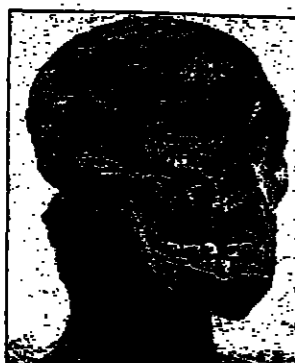
Should ocean war grave be invaded by cameras?



page 3

EUROPEAN BREAKS FROM £24 page 34 • Plus CREME • Plus INTERFACE

Three-million-year-old skeleton may rewrite man's history



The Taung child's skull

FROM SAM KILEY IN JOHANNESBURG

THEORIES about mankind's ancestry are likely to be thrown into confusion after the discovery of a skeleton more than three million years old in South Africa which could reveal that our ancestors roamed far wider across Africa and had greater genetic diversity than previously believed.

A team from the University of the Witwatersrand will reveal details about their find today. So far all that has been leaked is that the fossil predates any remains found anywhere

south of Tanzania by half a million years.

It also could confirm earlier findings that the "Taung child" discovered in South Africa in 1924, the skull of an early hominid rather than that of an ape, could be descended from the latest South African find.

Ron Clarke, the paleoanthropologist who found what are reportedly the oldest hominid remains ever found, will reveal more at a meeting in Johannesburg today.

The first news of the find was leaked by Jay Naidoo, the Information Minister, who could not contain

his excitement. "This week we will announce the discovery of humankind's most distant ancestors", he said. "Remains of an almost complete skeleton dating back more than three million years have been discovered in South Africa."

The claim, if confirmed, firmly establishes without any doubt that Africa was the cradle of mankind. But scientists will want to closely examine the skeleton to establish whether its upper jaw has a tell-tale ape-like "arrow-head" formation where the palate is not closed, or whether it more closely resembles modern humans' closed form.

Until Mr Naidoo revealed the discovery, Australopithecus africanus had been the earliest find in South Africa. The emergence of mankind has, until now, been more closely identified with east Africa where Australopithecus afarensis, dating back four million years, has been identified in Tanzania and Ethiopia.

Leading paleoanthropologists such as Richard Leakey and Don Johanson, who have been debating for years the number of branches in early humans' family tree, will be waiting for today's announcement with bated breath. Their often acrimonious debate has centred on Dr

Leakey's belief that mankind's earliest ancestors had "cousins" who died out as they evolved. Professor Johanson argues for a less complicated prehistoric genealogy.

The importance of the discovery of the skeleton lies in the fact that scientists will now be able to examine his hands and feet to determine how early man could use tools and walked.

The oldest skeleton ever discovered is that of "Lucy", a 3.75 million-year-old woman who was discovered in Ethiopia. This latest skeleton is more sophisticated than Lucy, although it still had a brain only the

size of a cup of coffee, a third of the size of the modern human brain.

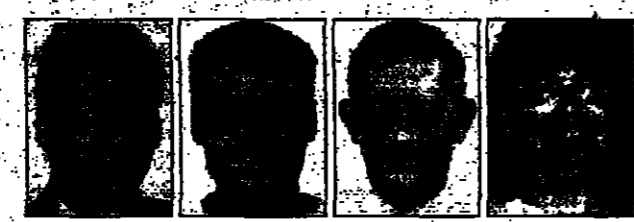
Norman Hammond, professor of archaeology at the University of Boston, said the skeleton held information about how recently man's ancestors have been able to use tools. At present, the earliest man-made tools date from 2.5 million years ago.

"A complete skeleton will be a revelation as for the first time we will have details about how upright these species stood, what kind of gait he had and how well developed his hands were for making and using tools," Professor Hammond said.

Secret talks were taking place with Chechen captors

Bungled rescue led to murder of hostages

BY ANNA BLUNDY, CLAUDIA JOSEPH AND DANIEL MCGORRY



The victims: Petchi, left, Hickey, Shaw and Kennedy

A BUNGLED rescue mission by Chechen special forces was blamed yesterday for the murder of four Western hostages — three of them British — five days after they had telephoned home to tell their families they were safe and full of hope.

The security forces apparently let slip that they knew where the men were being held and within hours the hostages had been executed and their heads left in a heinous sack by a main road. The British Embassy in Moscow said that the Russian Interior Ministry had reported a firefight before the killings — suggesting that a rescue attempt had gone disastrously wrong.

Darren Hickey, 26, Rudolf Petchi, 42, Peter Kennedy, 46, and the New Zealander Stanley Shaw, 58, had been installing a telephone network in the breakaway republic when they were seized from their supposed safe house in Grozny on October 3. The abductors at first demanded a \$4 million ransom, but had apparently halved that demand and negotiations to secure their release were proceeding.

The hostages were allowed to contact their employer, Granger Telecom of Weybridge, last week, and their families had been told about

the secret talks to free them. Eamon Hickey said last night that his son's only complaint had been that he was hungry. "It was a call full of hope," he said. "They were taken for ransom. There was nothing political about the kidnapping and the kidnappers have got no money from anybody, so why have they done it?"

The engineers, who were snatched a fortnight after the release of two other British captives, were the first Western hostages to be killed since the Chechen war of independence ended in 1996, and last night there were recriminations in both Britain and Russia.

The Chechen authorities had condemned Granger for sending men to Grozny against standing Foreign Office advice, while the Chechen security forces were criticised for their handling of the case.

Granger said that it obviously now regretted sending the men to Grozny, but insisted that it had taken appropriate security measures, including

24-hour armed guards. All four had accepted the risks.

The company had "recently opened a dialogue with the kidnappers", but had not been told about the rescue attempt. Ray Verth, the chief executive, said that he had received confirmation last week that all four were alive and well in a telephone call in which each of the hostages was allowed to pass on a personal message.

Mr Verth said: "Their murder is an appalling and barbaric act. We were especially shocked by this horrific news as we were making every effort to secure the safe release of the hostages." He would not, however, comment on reports that secret negotiations were being conducted using a Russian go-between. The billionaire Boris Beresovsky, who helped to free Camilla Carr and Jon James in September, is believed to have been involved in the talks. He said last night: "I tried to do everything possible on my side to stop this mess."

Tony Lloyd said that he had been told by the British Ambassador in Moscow that there had been "some kind of firefight". Other reports from Chechnya said that police had discovered the kidnap gang's mountain hideout near the Ighushan border on Monday night and that the rescue attempt had been compromised by a commander who had apparently broadcast the intention to storm the camp.

Another Russian news agency report suggested that one of the kidnappers had been arrested and the security forces had been closing in on the gang, prompting them to flee with their captives, who were then beheaded.

Peter Kennedy's MP, the Liberal Democrat Paul Keetch, said: "There was an extraordinary statement by the chief of police that they knew where the hostages were being held. Anybody who knows anything about anti-terrorist operations knows this would be crazy. The first thing it would do is panic the terrorists."

The Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, who had recently announced that he was taking personal command of the hunt for the men, apologised to their families, and President Yeltsin expressed his "deep dismay".

Kidnap business, page 13

Leading article, page 21



Gillian Allen with her children Melanie and Christopher. A consultant said she was a 'silly woman' to have cancer fears

Cancer victim dismissed as 'silly'

BY RUSSELL JENKINS

A FATHER of two, whose wife died of cancer after being misdiagnosed by a consultant surgeon, was awarded £80,000 at Manchester High Court yesterday in an out of court settlement.

Gillian Allen, of Radcliffe, Greater Manchester, was told by David Baumber, a specialist at Bury General Hospital, that she should stop making a fuss about the lump on her left breast.

Doug Allen said yesterday that on three occasions Mr Baumber had dismissed his wife as "a silly woman". Mrs Allen died two years later in 1994 after cancer spread from her breast to her liver.

The Bury Healthcare NHS Trust disclosed last week that it has recalled 40 women treated by Mr Baumber for breast

examination after concerns were raised over the post-operative care given to two of his patients who later died.

The alarm, raised by nursing staff at the hospital, led to an independent inquiry into 600 of Mr Baumber's cases. The consultant surgeon, who lives in Bury, has been forced to resign his post.

After the settlement was approved by the court, Mr Allen spoke of his determination to bring Mr Baumber to account. "I will not let him stand in front of another 28-year-old woman and say she was reading too many women's magazines and watching too much television."

His wife was first seen by Mr Baumber in July 1992. In subsequent visits, he assured her that the lump on her breast was harmless fatty tissue caused by having two chil-

dren — Christopher, who is now eight, and Melanie, seven — in quick succession. Mr Allen said that he is now

wracked with guilt. He took the consultant's lead and criticised his wife for pressing on with her cancer fears.

Table with 2 columns: Category and Price. Includes TV & Radio, Weather, Crosswords, Letters, Obituaries, Simon Jenkins, Arts, Chess & Bridge, Court & Social, Law Report, Homes, Creme.

Lawyers prepare briefs to stop Pinochet from leaving today

BY FRANCES GIBB AND RICHARD FORD

LAWYERS for human rights groups are preparing for a race against time today to prevent General Pinochet leaving Britain. They embarked on fresh legal moves after the Home Secretary turned down their request for advance notice of his decision, expected within hours today.

Home Office officials made clear that if Jack Straw decides in the Chilean general's favour — that he need not face extradition proceedings — then he will have to discharge the general's arrest warrant at the same time. This means the former dictator will be free to leave the country, unless protesters can successfully block the lifting of the warrant at the High Court.

Mr Straw's controversial decision, not to notify the rights groups, was expressed in a letter to Bindmans, solicitors for Amnesty International and

other groups which had asked for advance notice to ensure that they could mount a legal challenge to any decision in the general's favour.

The Home Secretary's refusal threatens to start a race, with lawyers trying to obtain a "stay" on the lifting of the warrant before the general, residing in a rented mansion at Virginia Water, Surrey, can reach his waiting jet at RAF Brize Norton, or, if it is moved, at Heathrow. The 70-mile trip by road to Brize Norton could take 90 minutes, while Heathrow is merely 17 miles away.

Geoffrey Bindman said Mr Straw's action was causing serious concern because it could allow the general to leave before a legal challenge is mounted. "Common sense and natural justice demand that any challenge to the Home Secretary's decision should be allowed to take place while General Pinochet remains in this country," he said. The letter from the Home Office said

there would be no advance notice and that he would "inform all parties of his decision... at the same time".

Bindmans are preparing for an emergency application that could be heard within an hour of the Home Secretary's announcement. The firm will be on standby and will have alerted

the High Court of the possibility of applying for an emergency hearing. "In an emergency, such as a deportation case where an order is about to be enforced, we can hear cases in one to two hours," Lynne Knapman, head of the Crown Office, said. But a QC said a judge could even hear an application within 15 to 20 minutes of papers arriving at court.

There were indications last night that the ministerial decision on the general's fate was imminent as Home Office advisers spent several hours in discussions.

If Mr Straw's decision goes against General Pinochet, the 85-year old former dictator will on Friday make his first public appearance, since his arrest on October 16, at Bow Street magistrates' court for the formal start of extradition proceedings to Spain.

The general's lawyers are also expected to challenge any decision to proceed with extradition proceedings.



"Relax, he'll never make it on time — he's got to go via the M25"

Zeneca in merger talks

Zeneca, the UK pharmaceuticals company, is in talks that could lead to a merger with Astra, of Sweden.

The deal, one of the biggest in European corporate history, would create a pharmaceuticals company with a stock market value of more than £42 billion. Shares in Zeneca, which demerged from ICI in 1993, rose 100p to £25.20, valuing the UK company at almost £24 billion. Page 25

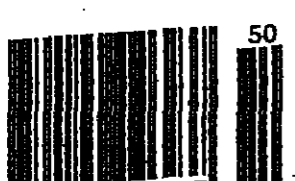
Lafontaine stokes tax rates row

Oskar Lafontaine, the German Finance Minister, refuted the row over European tax rates by suggesting that the British Government had asked him to tone down his language about harmonisation. Page 2

Back on board

The two Newcastle United board members who were exposed by a newspaper are back on the board of the club's parent company. Page 48

Advertisement for 4X long distance calls. Text: 'YOU'VE GOT TO BE mad to pay 4 times more FOR LONG DISTANCE CALLS.' Includes a cartoon character and phone number 0800 458 6818.



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The names have changed, but they sing the same old song

In politics, as around the campfire, some stories are bigger than their tellers; they shape the men and women who tell them. Not always. A Commons exchange on private education, for instance, changes with a change of power. A new Government sings different songs from the old, a new Opposition chants a different response. But what when the subject is Scotland? New Government, same old story, for the song is stronger than the singer. The personalities on both

sides of the dispatch box become like glove-puppets to the hands that move them. Tory and Labour gloves are swapped from hand to hand, but the hands never change. The puppet will dance the same dance. Watching Questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland yesterday, this sketch had a sense of déjà vu. It was the same before the election. The Government being in London, the issue becomes the Scottish People versus the Government — never mind which Government.

Opposition backbenchers wail about hardship north of the border: the Scottish National Party calls the Government an English conspiracy; ministers protest their munificence and Scottish MPs from the governing party squirm. Government backbenchers are caught between the upper and the nether millstone. Through gritted teeth those anxious to please their Front Bench congratulate the Scottish Secretary on his generosity. Those anxious to burnish their constituency profiles



push forward the bowl and demand more — the Scottish Secretary gritting his teeth. Most sit on their hands. Sandra Osborne (Lab, Ayr) gritted her teeth. Would Donald Dewar accept the "gratitude of the people of Ayr" for setting up the Prestwick Task Force? A relieved Mr Dewar would. Privately Mrs Osborne chalked up the gains and losses. Losses: ammunition to the SNP in Ayr — she can afford that, they come a poor third. Gains: Brownie point with Dewar. Maria Fyfe (Lab, Glasgow, Maryhill) hailed a settlement for further education in Scotland: "This is very good news." She can afford cheer. With a majority of 14,000, no party can touch the Labour

candidate for Maryhill, Michael Connarty (Lab, Falkirk E) pulled out the stops, asking Minister of State Helen Liddell, if she was "aware of the warm commendations which accompanied the applause" she had received after a recent speech in Scotland. She was becoming known as "Scottish Education's flexible friend" — but she was "firm as well as flexible". She had secured "vast resources" for Scottish education. Connarty's mates looked sheepish, but he's 13,000 votes

ahead of the SNP, so no problem there. For the Tory backbenchers, Nicholas Winteron (C, Macclesfield) beat his breast over the downturn in Scottish manufacturing. Five years ago Conservative backbenchers would have been asking joyful questions about inward investment into Scotland. Calum Macdonald, a minister, insisted that the economic news was good. Five years ago he would have been insisting, from the Opposition backbench, that it was bad. Yesterday, no Scottish Labour back-

bencher came to the minister's aid. Five years ago no Scots Tory with a narrow majority would have helped his own minister out on this. Roseanna Cunningham (SNP Perth) rose. Nothing unsettles the Labour roost as the Nationalists can. The SNP are feared. Ms Cunningham spoke of a Whitehall plot to keep Scotland in the dark. Labour squawked, pecked distractedly and shook their feathers in alarm. When a Nat speaks, the shadow of a bird of prey darkens the chicken-run.

Lafontaine sparks new row on EU 'harmony'

By Charles Bremner and Philip Webster

OSKAR LAFONTAINE, the German Finance Minister, reignited the row over European tax rates yesterday by suggesting that the British Government had asked him to tone down his language about "harmonisation". The Conservatives accused the Government of deliberate deception after Herr Lafontaine said he wanted to co-ordinate, not necessarily harmonise, energy taxes. His suggestion that his modified position took into account concerns expressed by the Government prompted Francis Maude, the Shadow Chancellor, to declare that Labour had been telling their European colleagues one thing and the British people another. Herr Lafontaine was clearly enjoying his role as the new bogymen of the sceptics. In a mocking reference to Britain in a speech to his Social Democratic Party, he added: "Don't be afraid that I could say anything here which might be misunderstood on the island."

er the burden on companies would have to be soundly financed. "It's very easy to cut taxes for all kinds of interest groups. But it's more difficult to say how the whole thing is to be seriously financed," he said. Downing Street played down any suggestion that it had asked Herr Lafontaine to "cool it". An official said: "We have not asked Herr Lafontaine to use the word co-ordination rather than harmonisation. We don't recognise that." However, he added: "It is in everyone's interest that we clarify what is meant by tax harmonisation. The Government is not hung up on language." Herr Lafontaine spoke out as the leaders of Germany and France jointly stepped up pressure for a review of Britain's rebate on the EU budget at Friday's EU summit in Vienna. The Finance Minister, who has been stung by *The Sun's* depiction of him as "the most dangerous man in Europe", said he had been misunderstood by sections of the British press. He was keen to reduce the tax burden on workers and consumers by raising levies on energy use, he said. Germany had room for manoeuvre in comparison with Britain because Britain already taxed petrol and diesel at a higher level. Germany's plan for its own reform was simple. "Taxes on jobs are much too high and taxes on energy use are relatively low. We want to cut taxes on jobs and raise energy taxes step-by-step."



The actresses Helen Baxendale and Billie Whitelaw were among the celebrities presenting awards at the Carlton Women in Film and Television Awards at the Dorchester in London yesterday. Among the recipients was June Whitfield, who received Channel Four's Lifetime Achievement Award from her *Absolutely Fabulous* co-star Jennifer Saunders. Whitfield, 73, who starred in the popular 1970s sitcom *Terry and June*, has also had roles in films as well

mony, she said: "Motherhood is fantastic. She is a brilliant new person to have around." Baxendale became popular on both sides of the Atlantic as Jennifer Aniston's rival for the affections of Ross in *Friends*. "It was a fantastic job to get, really good in career terms," she said. "Everybody seems to remember me from that show and I did it because I knew it would be a good career move." She declined to be drawn on whether she would make a return appearance.

Detention plan for danger patients

By Alexandra Freaux, Social Affairs Correspondent

NEW measures that will enable the authorities to lock up mentally ill people who are considered a grave risk to the public are to be introduced by the Government as part of a £700 million package of reforms to the mental health services. Announcing the first major changes to the discredited care in the community system since its introduction in 1980, Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, said that he would create a new form of "renewable detention" for people with severe psychopathic disorders who were considered untreatable. The proposals, drawn up jointly with the Home Office, are the result of concern about the number of violent crimes committed by people with personality disorders who are considered dangerous but who do not respond to conventional treatment with drugs or with therapy. The new measures will close a loophole in the law which, at present, makes it impossible to send these people to hospital against their will or to imprison them until they have committed a crime. Although he conceded that the detention of people who had not committed any crime raised "all sorts of ethical and practical problems", Mr Dobson said that public safety had to be his prime concern. "People whose mental illness poses a threat to others are a very small minority, but we must be able to deal with them. Their illness is often an even bigger threat to themselves." Mr Dobson also wants to give health workers new powers to force mentally ill people living in the community to take their medication.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arrests begin at site of toll-road protest

Almost 200 police from three forces moved in yesterday to begin the slow process of evicting protesters from the site of Britain's first toll motorway. There were four arrests in early skirmishes at the site near Weeford, Staffordshire, where the £700 million Birmingham Northern Relief Road will pass on its 27-mile route around the north-eastern quarter of Birmingham. Police were forced to close a section of the busy A38 dual carriageway, causing major tailbacks on alternative routes. Led by Muppet Dave, who served at the Newbury bypass, protesters have spent the past 14 months constructing a network of tunnels which they hope will frustrate the bailiffs for more than a month.

Tour office closures

British tourist offices in ten countries are to close. Ministers believe Britain should have a series of "one-stop shops" in foreign capitals and major cities instead of a clutter of small offices flying the British flag. Foreign tourists will be able to choose holidays in the countryside, on the coast or in one of the cities via the Internet. A new website is planned to show the full range of visits and breaks in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the main English holiday areas.

Eleventh body dug up

Harold Shipman, the GP charged with killing eight patients, appeared at Liverpool Crown Court and denied murdering Kathleen Grundy, 81, and forging her will. The pre-trial hearing was adjourned until January 12 and Dr Shipman, 52, whose practice is in Hyde, Greater Manchester, was given a provisional trial date of October 4. Yesterday police exhumed another of his patients, Muriel Grimshaw, 77, who died last year. Her body is the eleventh to be exhumed.

Union law delayed

The Government's proposals to increase union rights in the workplace have been delayed until the new year. Peter Mandelson, the Trade and Industry Secretary, told the London CBI: "We are determined that our proposals will take the question of trade union law out of our politics for the foreseeable future." He also sought to calm business fears that giving unions the right to official recognition would spark a series of workplace ballots.

Law 'harder on blacks'

Black people are five times more likely to be stopped and searched than white, according to Home Office figures published yesterday. They are also less likely to be let off with a caution and six times more likely to be jailed. Black people were also more likely to be murdered and their killers less likely to be caught, the Home Office report on race and the criminal justice system said. It also found that ethnic minorities made up 18 per cent of the prison population.

Teacher hit with chair

A teacher needed hospital treatment after an eight-year-old pupil hit her with a chair. The boy has been suspended from Tulloch Primary School, Perth, pending an investigation by the education authority and a disciplinary hearing. It is believed that the teacher, who has been at the school for several years, hurt her hand when she tried to intervene in a fight between the boy and another child. She is expected to be off work for two days.

Gummer's beef role

John Gummer said yesterday that he would never have told other people that beef was safe unless he had been willing to eat it himself and give it to his children. Mr Gummer, who was the Agriculture Minister from July 1989 to May 1993, told the BSE inquiry in London that he and his family had never stopped eating beef and that he himself was probably eating more now than before. Mr Gummer gained notoriety by publicly feeding a beeburger to his daughter Cordelia.

Bug threat to missile

The Ministry of Defence admitted for the first time that the millennium bug could have left Britain vulnerable to air attack. It discovered that the Rapier anti-aircraft missile would have failed to realign. The problem was identified inside the field equipment which activates the missiles and it would have made the entire system inoperable. The threat to Britain's defences posed by the computer bug was outlined by George Robertson, the Defence Secretary.

Richest Oxbridge colleges will have to help poorest

By Victoria Fletcher

THE wealthiest Oxford and Cambridge colleges are to be asked to support the poorer ones after the Government announced yesterday funding cuts of millions of pounds at the two universities over the next decade. Oxford University alone has estimated that the amount of government money available to its colleges will drop by £6.5 million in the next ten years and has expressed concern over the impact that will have on facilities at many of their newer, poorer colleges. Up until now, Oxford and Cambridge have had a unique system of funding. While the main university body receives

money from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC) in the same way as any other university, colleges have also been able to demand individual grants. The Government has estimated that the colleges have cost the taxpayer an extra £35 million. Yesterday they announced that from September next year Oxford and Cambridge will receive only a central grant, which will have to be distributed between the colleges by the university body. Oxford University pointed out yesterday that poorer colleges without large endowments to fall back on would have to be given a bigger slice

of the overall HEFC grant, leaving wealthy colleges to rely on their own resources. John Flemming, the Warden of Wadham College, said: "The collegiate university remains committed to redistribution of funds from the better-off to the less well-off colleges. We intend to enhance this process over the coming years." Making the announcement, however, the Department for Education and Employment said that the two universities would benefit from an extra £40 million funding for research and more money to preserve their ancient buildings.

Leaked memo 'puts the UK at risk of break-up'

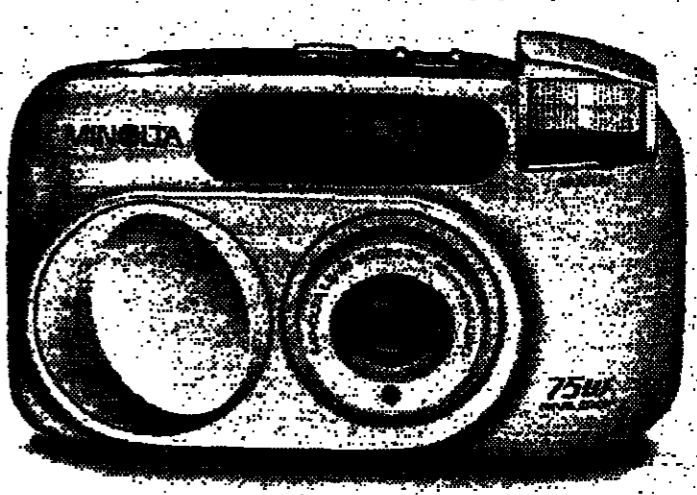
By Jason Allardyce, Scottish Political Reporter

A LABOUR MP accused the Government yesterday of risking the break-up of the UK after a leaked memo disclosed that Whitehall figures wanted to keep control of public funds that could be handed to devolved parliaments. John McAllion, who has been selected by Labour to contest the Holyrood elections, joined Tories and Liberal Democrats in claiming that the struggle within the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions played into nationalist hands. The internal memo dated October 28 from an executive officer said that the department's regional policy unit

"strongly" advised that officials should not volunteer spending information to the Scottish parliament and Northern Irish and Welsh assemblies. Mark Hamshar, an official with the unit, wrote that the onus should be on the new administrations to lay claim to money they may be legally entitled to control. In the memo, he said the department should "identify arguments why we should hold on to the funding centrally rather than let the devolved administrations take the initiative". The memo relates to a grey area of public spending in which some UK depart-

ments are responsible for programmes in Scotland that the new administrations may want to control. The Government was forced to insist there was no plot to snatch back funds from the Scottish parliament when the matter was raised twice in the Commons yesterday during Scottish Questions. Mr McAllion said Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, must raise the question of Whitehall resistance in discussions with Cabinet colleagues as a matter of urgency. "Scottish Ministers clearly expected goodwill and co-operation when they agreed the devolution settlement," he said.

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Titanic technology could solve riddle of the Hood

Rapid sinking of battlecruiser may have similarities to loss of liner, reports Damian Whitworth

AN AMERICAN deep-sea explorer hopes to descend into some of the world's most treacherous waters to solve one of the enduring mysteries of British naval history: how a single shell from the German battleship *Bismarck* sank the supposedly unsinkable *HMS Hood* in just two minutes.

Using the kind of technology that enabled the *Titanic* to be pinpointed on the seabed and then mapped, David Mearns plans to unlock the secrets of "The Mighty Hood" while the last few survivors of the encounter are still alive.

He insists that he will not disturb the peace of the 1,400 or more sailors who perished, but that may not be enough to reassure the families of those who perished.

The battleship, a flagship of the Navy in the 1920s and 1930s, met her end in the Denmark Straits on a cold May morning in 1941. She encountered the fearsome *Bismarck*, was hit and was rapidly beneath the waves. All but three of the crew died.

The shell that struck appeared to have set ablaze some small-calibre anti-aircraft ammunition scattered on her deck. Moments later, nearby British ships saw flames shooting up from her middle section, where the powder magazines were located, and the *Hood* snapped apart midship. The battleship's bow and stern sank, watched by nearby British ships, even as her 15in guns blasted a final salvo.

In his memoirs Winston Churchill described the ship as "one of our most cherished

naval possessions. Her loss was a bitter grief." The national dismay was mixed with incomprehension that, like the *Titanic*, the ship had sunk so easily. The attack was avenged by the Royal Navy a few days later when all available forces were sent to "pursue and destroy" the enemy battleship. After a 1,750-mile chase, immortalised in the film *Sink The Bismarck*, she was eventually sunk by relentless bombing and a torpedo strike from *HMS Victorious*.

Researchers now believe that the similarities with the *Titanic* could go further. The two ships were built at different shipyards and several years apart, but records show they were constructed from the same kind of steel, supplied to both ships by the manufacturer D. Colville & Co. of Motherwell in Lanarkshire.

The company no longer exists, but experts believe that if the metal was the same it could have been a crucial factor. *Opinion is divided*. Timothy Foeckel, a metallurgist at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Gaithersburg, Maryland, suggested last week that rivets recovered from the *Titanic* wreck showed signs of corrosion. But others have suggested that the hull of the *Titanic* was brittle and when the iceberg hit it simply shattered.

Mr Mearns intends to find out by making a film of the boat. He previously located the *Derfflinger*, the largest British ship to have sunk in the China Sea 800 miles south of Japan, and claims to have

NAVAL BATTLE IN NORTH ATLANTIC

H.M.S. HOOD BLOWN UP

Report of the sinking by the *Bismarck*, under Captain Lutjens, below left. Admiral Tovey sunk the *Bismarck*



found two wrecks, the whereabouts of which he will not disclose, which he believes are the deepest ever found.

He has conducted preliminary work for an expedition to find and examine the 46,000-ton *Hood*. To know where anything is 3,000 metres below the surface is the real trick. But we have a rough idea where she is and have reconstructed her final moments in the battle and we are confident we can find her. We have the quality of technology and the experience base of the people doing it. The weather is treacherous and you have a small amount of time when you can work each year because of icebergs.

Deep-water explorers are now believed capable of investigating 97 per cent of the seabed by using remotely operated vehicles that transmit film via fibre-optic cable. Side-scan sonar enables vast swaths of the sea floor to be searched quickly and global positioning satellites allow explorers to return swiftly to the same spot.

"Once we have found her we want to investigate with video cameras to shed some more light on the process of her sinking and why she went down so

quickly," said Mr Mearns whose company, Blue Water Recoveries is based in Haslemere, Surrey.

He is looking for a "knight in shining armour" to stump up £1 million for the venture because he insists that he does not intend to salvage the ship.

This type of project is really done for the sake of history, for posterity. This isn't a commercial venture, it isn't about salvage or bringing things back up. This is to find where she sank and to tell the story.

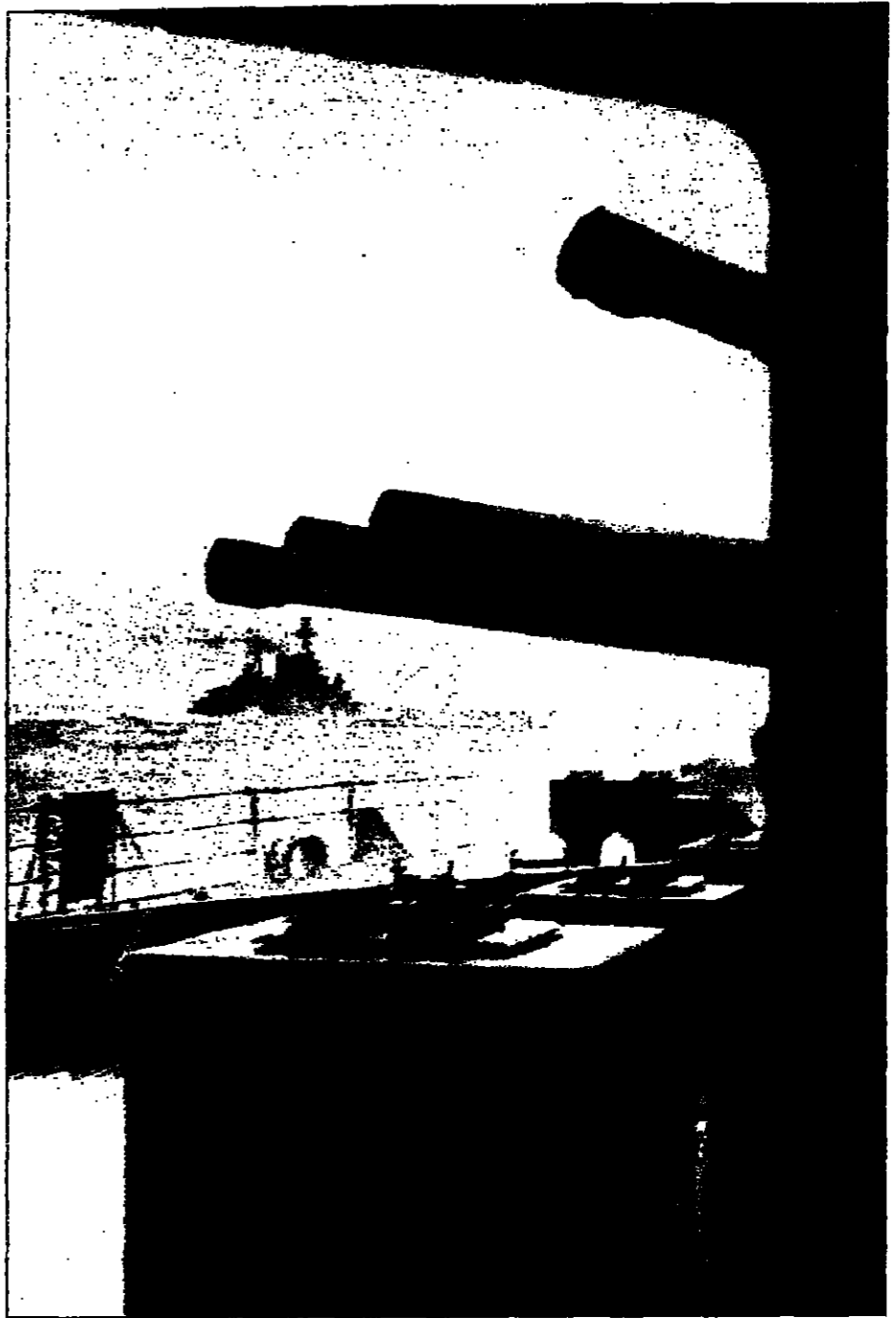
There is only one survivor left alive (Teddy Briggs) and only a handful of people left who served on her in the years before she sank.

He said that he would not go if it upset Mr Briggs but believed he had his support and insisted that he would not disturb the site. "It has dominated his life. He was a boy sailor on a ship that is one of the celebrated war losses. In everybody's book it is a war grave."

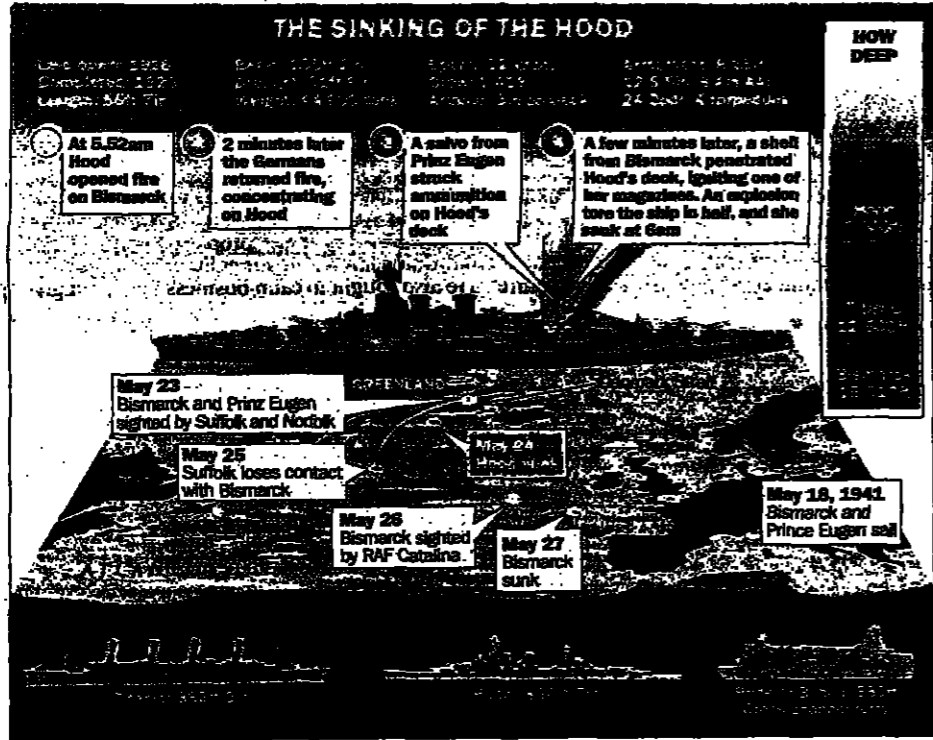
We are not interested in touching it, we are not interested in disturbing it in any way. The situation has become ridiculous with *Titanic* with trips every year and salvaging.

"The *Hood* was the biggest warship of the time and was the *Invincible Hood*. If I thought that the day I returned that there would be salvage teams coming for years afterwards I wouldn't do it.

But it will be done. If not by me, then by someone else. We have the technology, we could do it tomorrow."



The last picture of HMS Hood, seen from the *Prince of Wales*, as they faced the *Bismarck*



Relatives say filming would desecrate grave

By ADRIAN LEE

THE expedition to the wreckage of *HMS Hood* risks upsetting relatives and friends of the 1,418 men who lost their lives. Opponents of the dive say it would amount to desecration of a war grave.

A suggestion that the expedition team may seek permission to remove a small section of hull to try to establish why the warship went down so quickly is repugnant to many, including Ted Briggs, 75, one of the three survivors.

"I would class that as interference," he said. "My view is, look, don't touch. I would not be against them bringing up anything they found lying on the seabed, but I don't want to see the ship penetrated."

Mr Briggs, of Fareham, Hampshire, was a staff signaller on the deck of the *Hood* when she was hit. He was thrown into the water and be-

lieved he was going to drown when he was suddenly pushed to the surface with midshipman W. J. Dundas and Bob Tilburn. Both are now dead.

"She went down with bewildering rapidity," Mr Briggs said. "When I came up I could not see another soul."

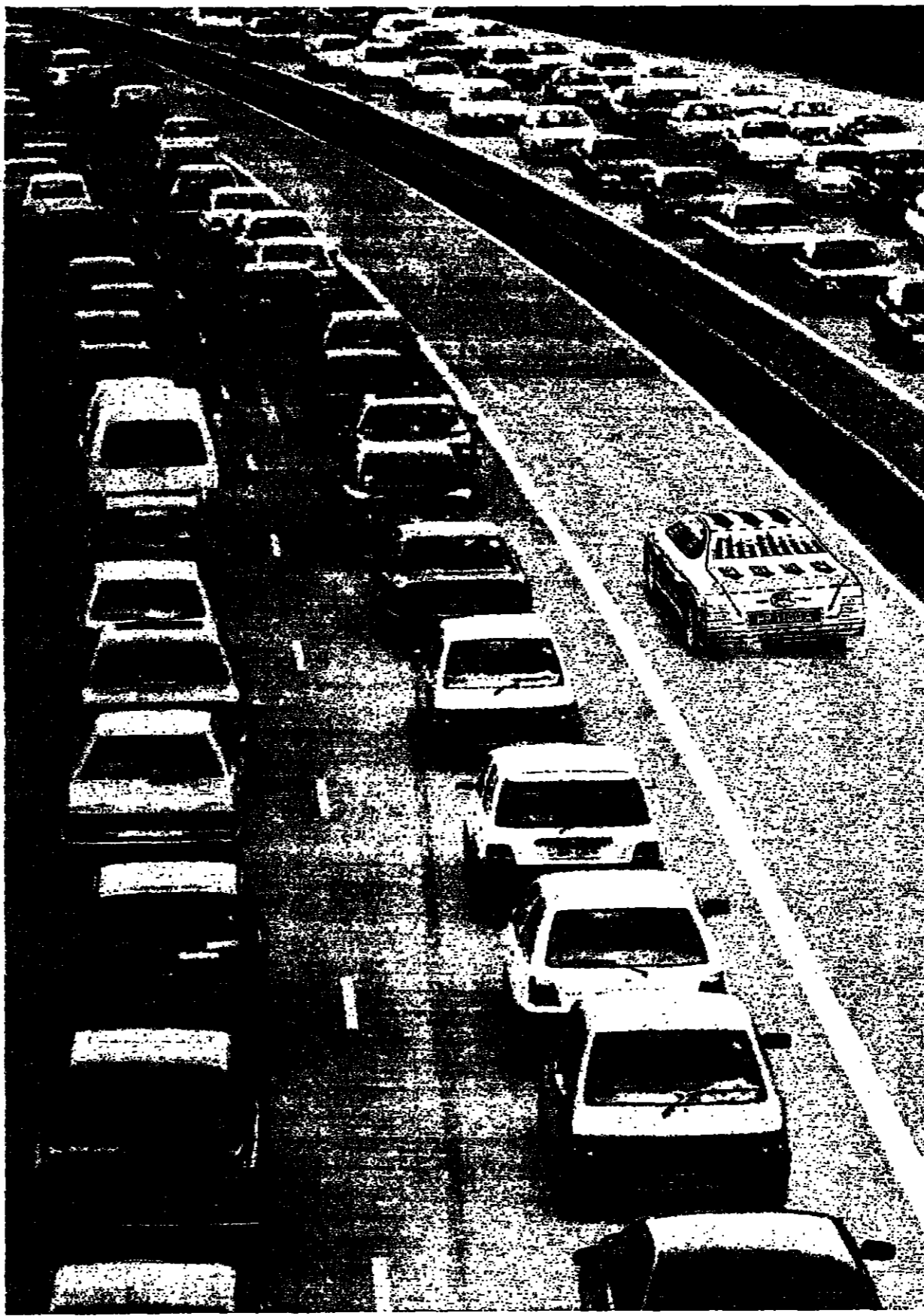
Frank Lock, 81, of Burwash, East Sussex, who served on *HMS Hood* from 1935-39 as a bandsman and lost 17 members of his regiment, said: "Any filming would be desecration. It is a war grave." He had been transferred to another ship by the time the *Hood* sank, but fondly recalls his days on board. "It was my first ship and they say your first is always your best."

When the idea of sending a film crew was first raised, he was so angry at the complacency of the *HMS Hood* Association that he resigned his

membership. John Williams, 82, the chairman and another former crewman, said he would not object to filming the exterior of the vessel, but "nobody is going to disturb those bodies down there".

He served on the *Hood* for two years and was on the corvette *Carnation* when news of the sinking came through. "She was the pride of the fleet and I thought she was as safe as houses. I loved that ship and lost many friends."

But there are those who support an operation which would involve drilling away part of the hull to test it for metal contamination. Les Morley, of Farnborough, Hampshire, whose father, Sidney, a chief petty officer, died on the *Hood*, said: "I would be interested in finding out what happened. I see nothing wrong with taking a small sample."



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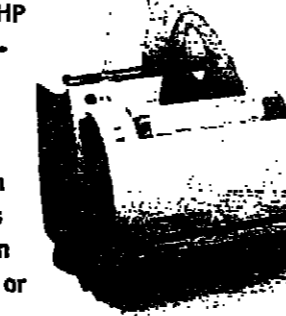
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Hewitt sues for Diana letters

By SUSIE STEINER

JAMES HEWITT, the retired army officer who had a three-year affair with Diana, Princess of Wales, yesterday issued a High Court writ demanding the return of her love letters.

Mr Hewitt, 40, claims he has been "wrongfully denied" 64 letters that are now in the hands of solicitors acting for the executors of the Princess's estate.

The letters, written on blue airmail paper, were

sent between 1989 and 1991. Many were received by Mr Hewitt in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait while he was serving as a captain in the Gulf War.

A spokesman for his lawyers, Harfayns, said yesterday: "He has asked me to say that he very much hopes that it will not be necessary for there to be a full public trial at which the ownership of the letters needs to be tested and that those in possession of them will behave lawfully."

The letters were taken from Mr Hewitt's Devon manor house in March. Frances Shand Kydd, the Princess's mother and one of the executors, said: "There is no problem about returning the letters to James Hewitt save that, to date, there has been no assurance from him as to their safe keeping in the future, which is required."

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Tell it like it is, revived rock bands are warned

Are those ageing strummers on the stage your pop idols, or a poor imitation? Carol Midgley reports

ADVERTISING watchdogs have issued a stern warning to pop bands that stage comeback tours by falsely trading on past glories. Fans expecting to see the original line-up of the band they once idolised often find instead a pale imitation amounting to a struggle of "session musicians and an ageing drummer", the Advertising Standards Authority said yesterday. At a time when many bands from the Seventies and Eighties are enjoying a revival, the authority emphasised that posters and advertisements must not mislead fans. The warning was made after the watchdog upheld a complaint made about a press advertisement for "Michael Flatley's Lord of the Dance", with a picture of the Irish dancer's feet. Flatley has now retired from dancing, but in the au-

thority's view, the poster implied that he would be performing in the show. Flatley remains the chief artistic director of the performance and they are branded with his name. The picture of his feet is the show's logo, but the advertisers have now agreed that, in future, posters will make it clear that he will not actually be dancing. A spokesman for the authority said it had also acted recently over a poster advertising the Hit and Run revival tour by Genesis earlier this year. The poster featured photographs of Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel, both former lead singers who left the band years ago. "To anyone looking at the posters it looked like Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel were going to be performing in the show when actually they weren't," the spokesman said.



Genesis now: in the beginning the line-up was different

"We resolved the matter privately with the advertisers. It does happen quite a lot. I remember a gig by The Byrds when the bassist was the only original member playing." ABC are joining fellow Eighties bands Culture Club and Human League for the Big Re-Wind Tour. But Martin Fry, the lead singer, is the only ABC founder remaining. Some bands take a more direct approach to changes in their line-up. A comeback version of the Electric Light Orchestra is called ELO 2 be-

cause Jeff Lynne is no longer the lead singer.

In its monthly report the advertising watchdog painted the scenario of a fan turning up to see a revival band. "You've bought the front-row tickets, dug out your old tour T-shirt and even relearned the song lyrics," it said.

"You're ready to swoon again over the pop group that you idolised in your teens. Yet when you get to the venue, on stage is a disappointing collection of session musicians and only the ageing drummer is an original band member."

Advertisers should be careful when promoting bands or entertainers based on past glories or the fame of individuals who no longer perform on stage. If the content and line-up of the show changes dramatically from that advertised, consumers can be misled and disappointed. To avoid problems, advertisers should make sure that what goes on the page will be on the stage."

Duran Duran, page 36



Michael Flatley: now star of the show in name only

Industry asked to reward good turns

By RICHARD FORD HOME CORRESPONDENT

PRIVATE industry is to be asked to sponsor the annual good citizen awards in memory of Philip Lawrence, the headmaster murdered outside his school three years ago.

The Home Office wants private companies to meet some of the £50,000-a-year cost of running the scheme, which rewards youngsters for helping others.

Five groups won awards yesterday, the third anniversary of the murder of Mr Lawrence outside his school in Maida Vale, northwest London. Frances Lawrence, his widow, presented the groups with a £750 cheque each at a ceremony attended by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and the Duchess of Kent. Mrs Lawrence said: "We adults often don't make a very good job of things. In many ways you [youth] can be our teacher."

The only private organisation currently giving cash is the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation which provided £6,000 this year.

Florists convicted of taking cemetery flowers

By A CORRESPONDENT

A FLORIST and his wife were found guilty of stealing flowers from a cemetery yesterday. David Scott, 61, collapsed in court when he and his wife, Mary, 45, of Blaydon, Tyne and Wear, were convicted of four charges of taking floral tributes from the garden of remembrance at Preston cemetery in North Shields.

Judge Denis Orde told them: "You are a couple of grave robbers who committed a very shabby, heartless piece of stealing. Nobody would do what you did."

Judge Orde left Durham Crown Court for ten minutes while Scott tried to compose himself for sentencing. When he returned, Scott shook as he sentenced them both to nine-month suspended prison sentences. They were each ordered to pay £500 in prosecution costs. A fifth charge of theft had been dropped earlier in the four-day trial.

After the case Emma Dorn, 21, from North Shields, the granddaughter of Ethel Houston, whose floral tributes were stolen by the Scotts, said: "It was absolutely shocking when we found out. I think they're sick individuals. Our family will now take some new flowers to the cemetery to honour my grandmother."

Stephen Duffield, for the Scotts, said in mitigation that the couple had had to sell their business and to move home because of the abuse they had received. They had even had to move their daughter to a different school.

"As soon as the allegations became public, they were subjected to verbal abuse, threatening telephone calls, death threats and poison pen letters." The judge told them that these were things they would have to put up with. "You have been found guilty of raiding that cemetery in the hours of darkness when nobody would have been about and doing it time and time again. It was a crime of greed — there's no other way of describing it."

Dublin gets the message over U2 graffiti

By AUDREY MAGRE IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

A PIECE of rock history was wiped out yesterday when council officials in Dublin sand-blasted and painted over walls of graffiti dedicated to the group U2.

The walls around the recording studios used by the band to make its first three albums carry more than ten years of messages from fans. But Dublin Corporation has decided the scribbles are unsightly and is removing them.

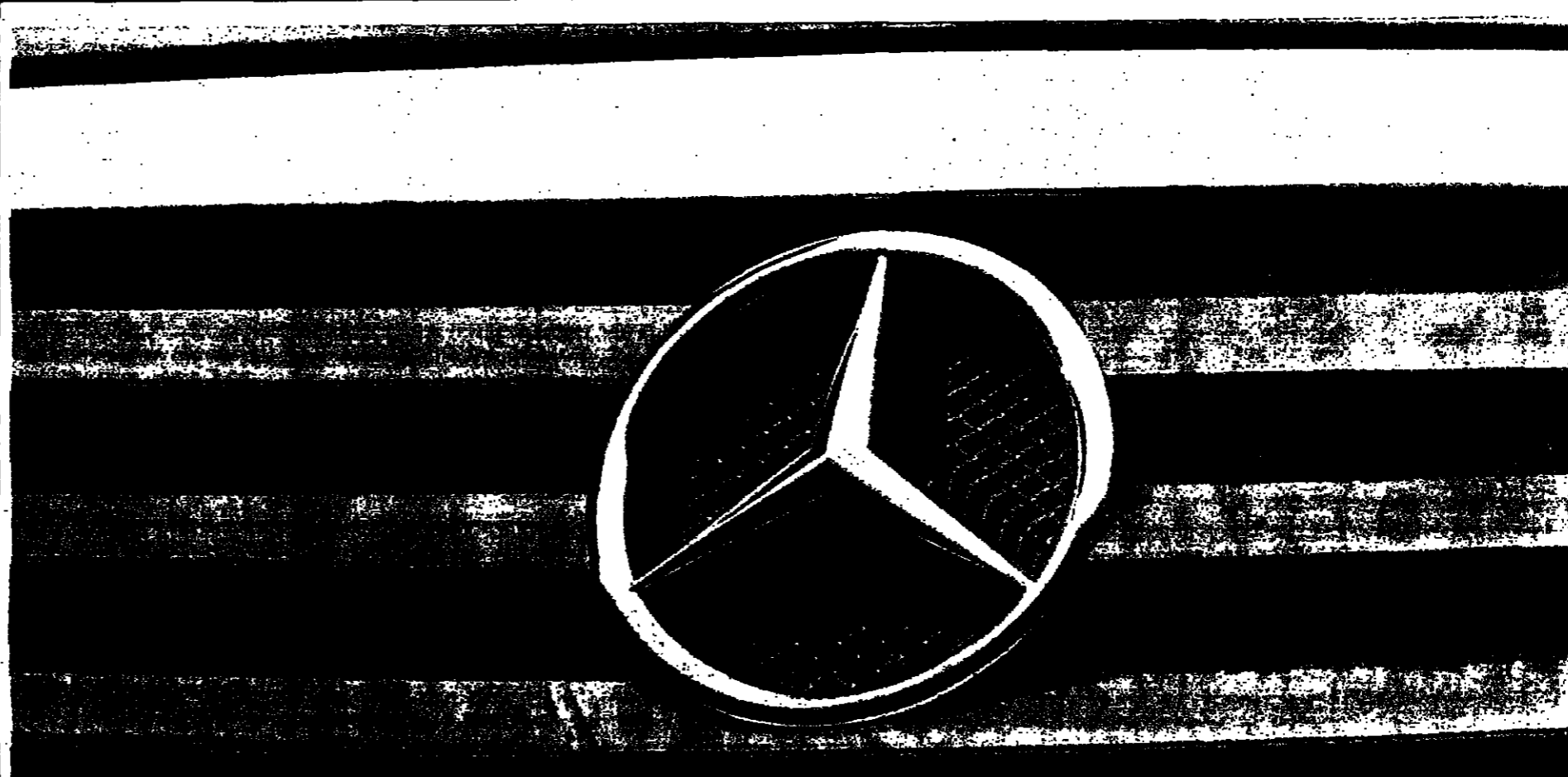
The move is certain to disappoint fans from across the world who pour into the Irish capital every year to follow the U2 trail, visiting all the sites associated with the band, including the Windmill Lane recording studios in Dublin's docklands, where the band worked for about six years until 1990.

Fans used to wait outside the studios in the hope of catching a glimpse of Bono, The Edge, Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen. As they did so they scribbled messages on the studio walls. The graffiti gradually extended beyond the studio walls along half of Windmill Lane, prompting residents and businesses to complain to the corporation.

Paul Rainford, who is in charge of removing the graffiti, said: "It is OK to come down here on a Saturday morning and peruse the latest artwork on the wall, but if you work here or if you live here it is an entirely different matter and I am not prepared to turn my back on these people."

The area is a mixture of old Dublin families and new residents. Many of the older residents, such as Gerard Augusta, blame the newcomers for the complaints. Mr Augusta said: "The graffiti has put this area on the map. It's unique and it attracts people from all over the world here. If you get rid of it, then it will just turn Windmill Lane into any old back street."

After negotiation with the corporation, it was agreed to allow the studio wall remain as a shrine to U2.



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New car prices are rigged, say MPs

Massive discounts for fleet buyers mean the private motorist is losing out, reports Carl Mortished

MOTOR dealers were accused yesterday of rigging the new-car market at the expense of private motorists.

A committee of MPs attacked the huge price discrepancy between new cars sold in Britain and those available on the Continent, and urged the Office of Fair Trading to consider criminal prosecutions against anyone suspected of anti-competitive behaviour.

The House of Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee yesterday blamed the power of manufacturers, their relationship with fleet car buyers and weak competition law for the poor deal suffered by private car buyers.

The committee found evidence that most car prices were 30-40 per cent higher in Britain than on the Continent, while a few were almost 60 per cent higher.

Its report, *Vehicle Pricing*, concluded that fleet buyers were getting big discounts for new cars, leaving the private buyer to pay the highest prices. Martin O'Neill, the committee's chairman, said: "Private motorists are paying for cosy deals between manufacturers and fleet buyers. It is the ordinary car buyer who is funding the fleet discounts. Certain

companies have been getting away with it for too long." The report notes that fleet sales account for up to 74 per cent of the new-car market with discounts for very large fleet buyers ranging between 20 and 40 per cent.

The MPs also criticised the "block exemption" for car manufacturers from EU competition rules, allowing them to grant exclusive franchises to dealers in exchange for special servicing. Such deals would otherwise be prohibited as monopolistic under the Treaty of Rome.

The block exemption has been in existence since 1936 but the committee concluded "the block exemption in its current format is not operating in



O'Neill: he said private buyers got raw deal

the consumer interest" and recommended that it be scrapped. The report also concluded that:
 Exchange-rate fluctuations do not account for the price differentials as consumers were not benefiting from lower prices for imported cars;
 Consumers were encountering obstacles in their attempts

to purchase cars elsewhere in Europe.

There was no evidence that right-hand-drive cars accounted for the price differential;

There was general dissatisfaction with the service provided by garages.

The Office of Fair Trading is investigating the new car market but the MPs yesterday fired a shot over the bows of the competition watchdog, stating that it was concerned at the feebleness of the OFT's powers. The select committee hoped the OFT would "rise to the challenge" of the powers made available when the Competition Act comes into force in March 2000.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said that, the committee had not proven that the fleet market was being subsidised by private buyers. The society said that the block exemption was the best guarantee of service for car owners and pointed out that the European Commission, in granting the exemption, had said that it was indispensable.

However, Alan Pulham, the franchised dealers' director of the Retail Motor Industry Federation, said the report endorsed the federation's view that dealer margins had been reduced to a point where dealers could have little impact on prices. He said: "On balance, we agree that block exemption is not operating in the interest of the consumer or dealer."



EU BUYER'S GUIDE TO THE FIAT PUNTO

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| France | £5,475 |
| Italy | £6,200 |
| Spain | £7,000 |
| UK | £7,834 |
| Ireland | £8,840 |
| Netherlands | £1,160 |
| Denmark | £1,140 |
| Austria | £6,060 |
| Greece | £6,060 |
| Finland | £8,320 |
| Belgium | £7,160 |
| Luxembourg | £6,906 |
| Portugal | £6,914 |
| Sweden | £6,858 |



The shed at Burrator reservoir: an eyesore to some, a rare example of Victorian corrugated iron to others

Shed is not just any old iron

Simon de Bruxelles on the fight to save a relic of Victorian ingenuity

IT IS just a corrugated iron shed, but to conservationists it is as much part of Britain's heritage as any architectural gem. Yesterday they launched a campaign to save the gently rusting structure that has stood beside the Burrator reservoir on Dartmoor for more than 100 years.

Once it sheltered the navies building the reservoir near Tavistock, but in the past ten years the shed has fallen victim to neglect and decay.

Now South West Water, which owns the reservoir, wants it replaced with a modern structure. However, the Dartmoor Society claims the 35ft by 30ft shed should be preserved as a rare survivor from the corrugated iron age. The society has written to Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, and the Dartmoor National Park Authority calling for the structure to be listed.

Tom Greaves, chairman of the Dartmoor Society, said: "This may look like a big green shed, but we believe it is very rare and very interesting because it has survived from the days when the reservoir was built between 1893 and 1898 by the Plymouth Corporation."

"There is a growing interest in early examples of corrugated iron which have survived. It was a much thicker material in those days and better quality than the modern-day stuff and it is interesting that buildings like this with such a temporary appearance have survived."

"We often do not recognise the importance of buildings that appear commonplace until it is too late."

The society says that a modern replacement would contribute to the "creeping suburbanisation" of Dartmoor.

Graham Wall, assistant Dartmoor National Park officer, said a decision on the proposal to demolish the building was being delayed while experts were consulted.

Corrugated iron was patented in 1829 by Henry Palmer, then working on London Docks. Its invention coincided with the development of the railways and its strength, low cost and relatively lightness made it the perfect material for station roofs and engine sheds.

Paul Dutton, building conservation officer with Somerset County Council, who wrote his thesis on corrugated iron, said: "It is a much underrated material, partly because there is so much of it rusting in farm yards."

"Not much has survived from the early days because we now mistakenly regard it as a material only used for temporary structures. But if it is kept painted to slow down the rusting process it has a remarkably long life."

A spokesman for South West Water was yesterday bemused by the fuss. "All that has been proposed is to build a similar shed," he said. "Our aim is to house a tractor and equipment."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

£13m claim by Hitler's victims

The Government has received compensation claims totalling £13 million from 180 victims of the Nazis who had assets in Britain seized under the 1939 Trading with the Enemy Act. The details were revealed yesterday by Peter Mandelson, the Trade and Industry Secretary, who announced a scheme to pay the claims. He acknowledged that speed was vital because of the age of those who survive. There may be thousands of claimants, mostly Jews who sent their valuables here for safekeeping.

Mr Mandelson said: "This is not a glorious chapter in our island's history. We failed to differentiate between our enemies and their victims."

Store ad offends

The Advertising Standards Authority has upheld complaints about an advertisement for Harvey Nichols showing a woman who had just given birth wearing gold high-heeled shoes with the message, "A new shoe department is born."

£50m drugs find

A third of a tonne of cocaine, worth £50 million, has been found hidden in an earth mover at Felixstowe Docks. The machine was en route from South America to Drontheim in Holland, where Dutch police arrested three men.

PC suspended

A police constable has been arrested for suspected drink-driving and suspended from duty during Cambridgeshire police's anti-drink driving campaign. The officer smelled of alcohol after driving in for his early morning shift.

Pets at risk

Attacks in which nearly 100 cats and rabbits have been mutilated have extended to North, East and South London, Surrey, Kent and Sussex, the RSPCA said. The attacks are not thought to be the work of one person.

Request stop

A bus driver was suspended amid claims that he had sex with a prostitute in the back of his bus. He was spotted picking up the woman in Eastville, Bristol, on Friday at the end of his route, before driving into a dimly lit street.

Learner drivers face tougher test

BY MARK HENDERSON

WOULD-BE drivers will from next spring have to complete a test including dual-carriage driving, higher speeds, and longer routes before they can take the wheel alone, the Roads Minister, Lord Whitty, announced yesterday.

The new test, which will be seven minutes longer, will also fail drivers who make more than 15 minor driving errors such as using an instrument incorrectly. Only one in three drivers will be asked to perform an emergency stop, and manoeuvres will be tested more rigorously, with three-point turns and reversing examined at length. Failed drivers will get written feedback on their errors.

A section of dual carriage-way will be included in the test where possible and routes will be faster. Ministers said the old test concentrated too heavily on slow-speed driving in urban areas and left young motorists unprepared.

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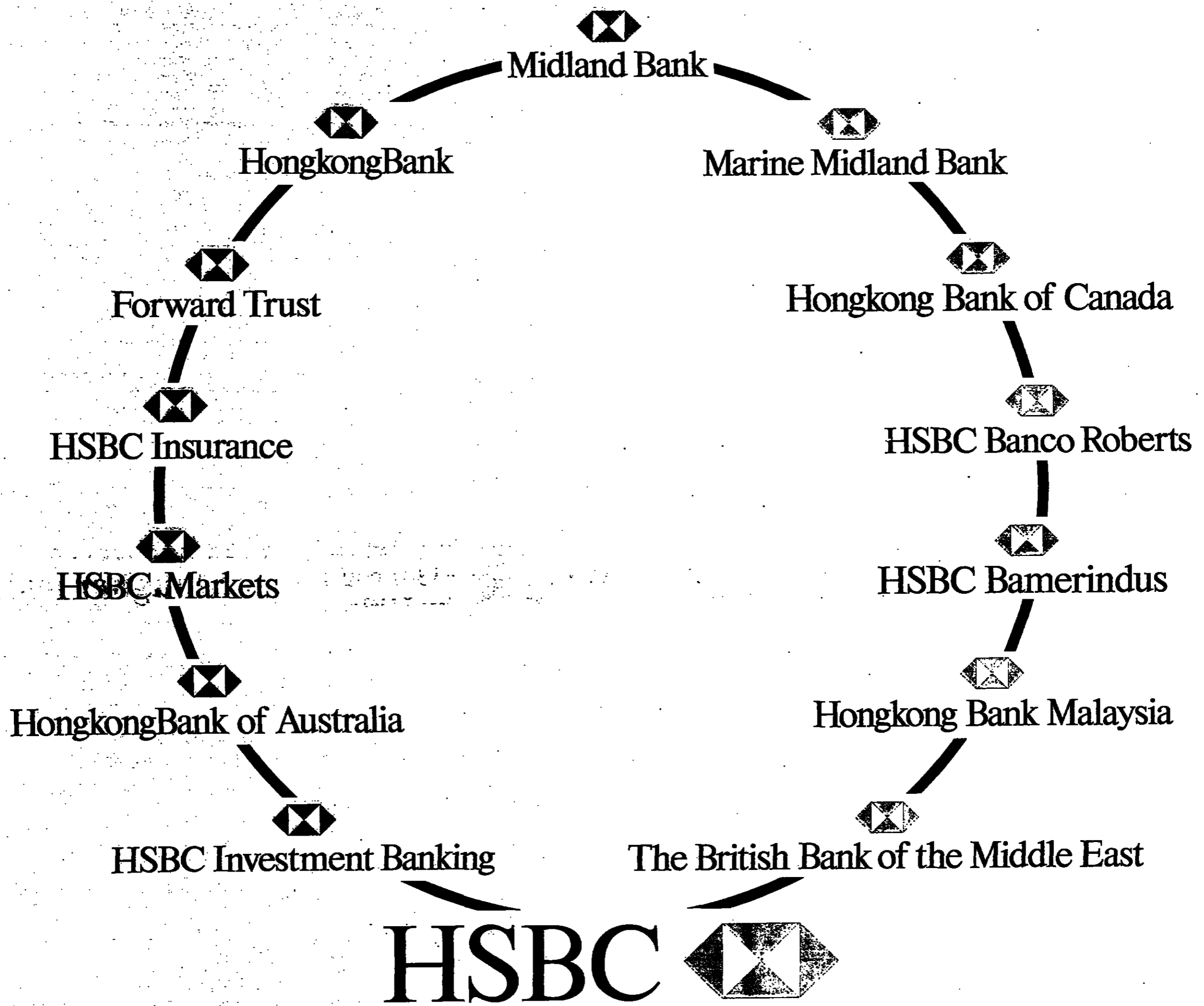
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Village mourns pub team killed on way to party

BY PETER FOSTER

A VILLAGE was trying to come to terms yesterday with the deaths of five members of its pub football team in a road accident on their Christmas outing.

The Stamford Arms team from Groby, Leicestershire, were travelling to a party at an indoor ski centre in Tamworth, Staffordshire, when a lorry collided with the back of the minibus, flipping it on to its roof. The rear portion of the

vehicle was destroyed by the impact.

Yesterday Groby, where almost all the young men lived, was in a palpable state of shock. At the Stamford Arms a notice hung on the door announcing that the pub was closing until further notice. Inside survivors and their friends and relatives gathered together for comfort.

The crash on a particularly dangerous stretch of the south-

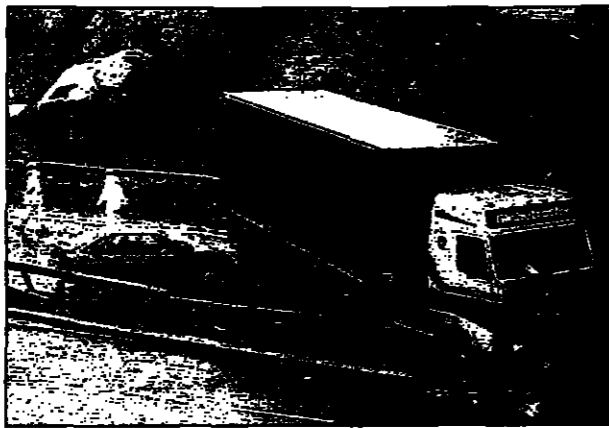
bound A42 near Measham happened at about 8.15pm on Monday as the 17 young men were en route to their party.

Yesterday most relatives were too upset to speak about the accident, and those who did struggled to express the depth of their feelings. Marilyn Thompson, whose son Paul, 22, was killed in the impact spoke for her husband, Bill and Paul's three brothers, Nigel, Michael and Steve: "The lads all knew each other from school and lived and breathed football. Paul was a wonderful son who was soccer mad, playing Saturdays, Sundays and training in midweek. He was always scoring goals and loved to see his name in the local paper. He worked hard and played hard. They were all dressed up and ready to go out for a good time. Paul had been looking forward to the party for ages."

The Kouroushi family, whose son Panayi was also killed, closed the fish and chip shop they run in the village after learning of his death late on Monday night. A sign told customers: "It is with deep re-



The deaths included Stephen Parker, second left, back; Jeremy Goodhall, third right, front; and Paul Thompson, front right



The scene of the accident on the A42 near Measham

gret that Andreas and Liz announce the sudden passing away of their beloved son Panayi. The shop will remain closed until further notice." Three slim bunches of flowers had been left at the doorway. Olga Mearkhor, a cousin of the family, told how 30-year-old had been planning to take his car to the party, but decided against it at the last minute,

deciding that the minibus would be more fun. "He is a teetotaler," she said. "He was not a footballer, but the team were his friends."

The others who died were named as Stephen Curtis, 28, from nearby Newtown Linford; Stephen Parker, 21, from Groby; and Jeremy Goodhall, 30, from Leicester Forest East. One other member remains in

a serious condition at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Malcolm Jennings, the landlord of the Stamford Arms, said: "The players of this club are more than just customers of the pub. They are personal friends and our thoughts at this time go out to the families of all those who have been affected by this tragedy." The team was recently reformed af-

ter a lapse of some years when Mr Jennings and his brewery offered them sponsorship for this season in the Leicester Sunday Alliance League.

Paul Prince, 19, who survived this crash, said: "We were doing about 30 or 40 miles an hour in the slow lane. All I remember is hearing a loud crash and being sprayed with glass."

BBC to teach staff about Scotland

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

BBC journalists based in London are to be given crash courses on the politics of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if BBC Governors decide tomorrow to rule out a devolved Six O'Clock News.

Reporters, news editors and presenters will be offered training on the new political institutions such as the Scottish parliament, and modules on the different Scottish education and legal systems, to avoid blunders if, as expected, London retains control of the prime-time news broadcast.

Television watchdogs for Scotland and Wales have been campaigning for an hour-long programme of news at 6pm, controlled by Glasgow and Cardiff. However the BBC's Board of Governors has said that it is likely to veto such a proposal and is "minded" to support the London alternative for a revamped "News Hour" which would be edited from the capital.

According to the Governors it is felt that to avoid inaccuracies "a comprehensive BBC-wide training programme" will be needed "to ensure all staff are thoroughly familiar with what makes Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland different". One BBC source said: "In other words, they will have to start with a map and a pointer."

Yesterday the Broadcasting Council for Scotland, which represents two million viewers, held talks with Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman of Governors, in an 11th-hour effort to press for a "Scottish Six". A recent poll showed that 69 per cent of Scots supported a devolved news hour, and yesterday the Educational Institute for Scotland, the country's largest teachers' union, also backed the change.

Research carried out by the council shows that Scotland gets poor and often inaccurate coverage in the London-based national news half-hour. On average, Scottish events make up just 1 per cent of the items covered.

Girl escapes as blast kills parents 4ft brings the house down

BY SIMON DE BRUNELLES

A 13-YEAR-OLD girl escaped with minor injuries when an explosion ripped apart a houseboat killing both her parents yesterday.

Sorrel Watson was asleep in a bedroom directly above her parents' cabin when the explosion wrecked the steel-hulled houseboat just before 5am.

Her father, Adam Watson, 41, and mother, Rachel, 35, are believed to have died instantly when the 70ft Dutch barge

Harlequin blew up and sank at her quayside mooring in Penryn, Cornwall. The blast, thought to have been caused by gas from a leaking cylinder on board, shattered windows 100 yards away.

Sorrel managed to escape from the wreckage and telephoned police before being taken to Treleike Hospital, Truro, where she was treated for shock. The couple's oldest daughter Polly, 16, had moved into a flat just a week ago and was not on board.

Mr Watson was a senior lecturer in sound engineering at Truro College and his wife was a photographer. The family had lived on the boat for about a year.

Station Officer Chris Rubery, one of the first firemen on the scene, said: "It's absolutely amazing anyone should get out of that. The forward accommodation had been ripped open by the explosion and the aft accommodation was very badly damaged."

Firefighters worked up to their necks in freezing water to search the boat for survivors as the tide rose. Divers were airlifted to the scene from the Royal Naval Air Station at Culdrose, near Helston, to help in the search.

The couple's bodies were found in the aft cabin on the lower decks.

Alan Mobbs, a spokesman for Devon and Cornwall Police, said that Mr Watson had changed the boat's gas cylinder the day before the explosion. Leaking gas could have collected in the bilges and exploded when it reached the pilot light or a stove.

Yesterday workmen began dismantling the property by hand after the Bristol-based developers, Westbury Homes, lost an appeal to the Environment Secretary after a public inquiry.

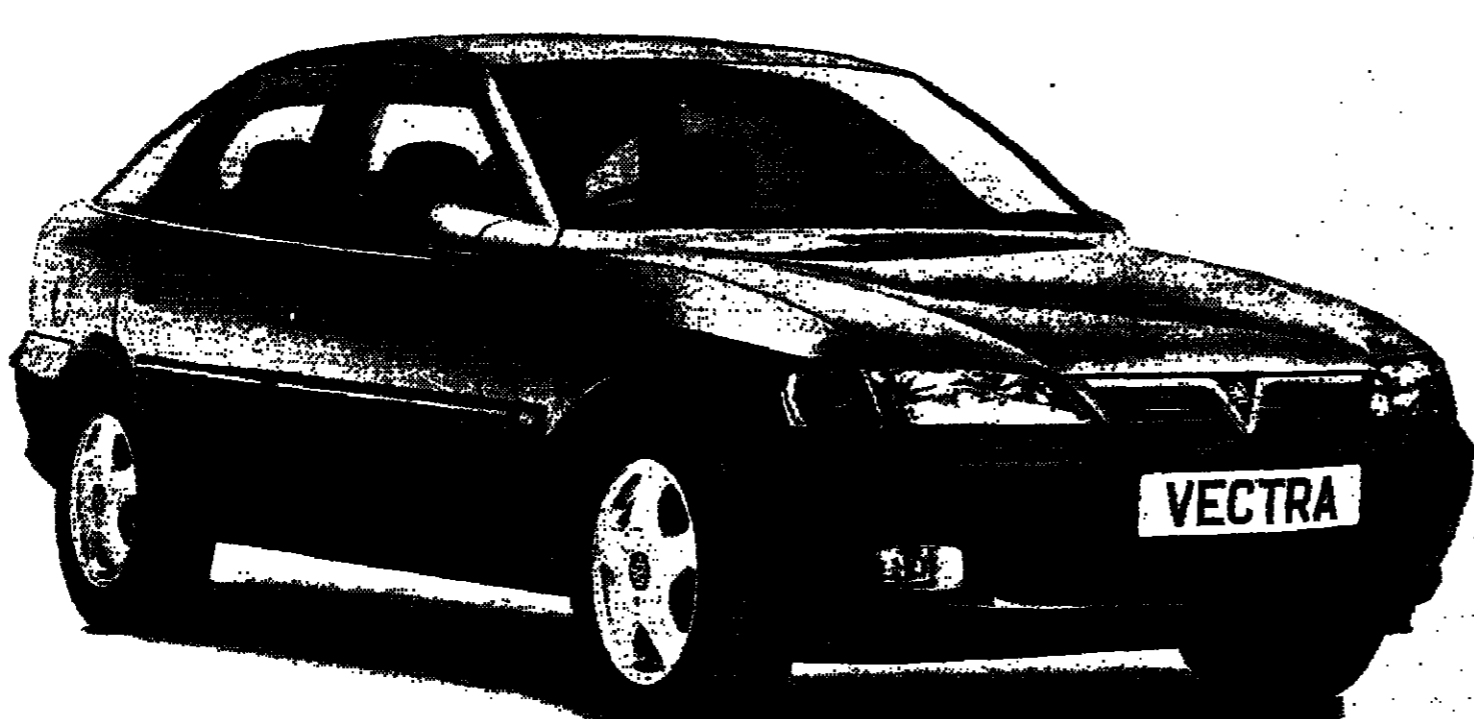
Several other houses on the 40-home Riverside estate at Combech, Somerset, which were also found to be too high are being allowed to stay.

Basil Juniper, Sedgemoor district council's development control manager, said: "This is becoming an increasing problem because developers don't like paying land fill tax for the soil they have to remove."

The council served an enforcement notice on the highest house and a public inquiry was held after the developers appealed. The council suggested modifications such as raising the bedroom window so it was too high to look out of but they were rejected.

Lilian Cartwright, a Sedgemoor district councillor, said the demolition showed that developers would not be allowed to get away with breaking the regulations.

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Lonely vigil of a man who can't win

FOR many Labour MPs Jack Straw has been the Cabinet success of the Government. But an octogenarian former dictator against whom the Home Secretary marched in his student days has caused him his most nagging headache since he entered office.

In the past 18 months he has managed to hurdle the obstacles usually strewn in the path of home secretaries with a steadiness of purpose and charm that has often disarmed his opponents.

Even standing on a soapbox taking questions from his constituents in Blackburn, the ever cautious Mr Straw had a stock reply for a query about the extradition of General Augusto Pinochet. Miles from Westminster and the Law Courts, the Home Secretary replied late last month: "There is very little I can say about the case at the moment because I am operating in a quasi-judicial function."

The phrase and a variation of it were to be repeated endlessly by Mr Straw, the Prime Minister and ministers at the Foreign Office as they insisted that the decision taken by the Home Secretary was a judicial one and not a political matter.

Since the law lords ruling on November 25, Mr Straw has gone into a self-imposed political purdah and avoided discussing the question of the former Chilean dictator's extra-

Straw's Pinochet dilemma is his toughest test yet, report Richard Ford and Philip Webster

dition with any of his ministerial colleagues. Whatever he has decided about the fate of General Pinochet, however, will upset a lot of people, although he only actively began studying the details of the case on Monday afternoon.

"The idea that he has discussed the matter with Robin Cook or any other minister is complete nonsense. It is not his style," one senior Home Office official said. The Home Secretary has continued to attend Cabinet committees and the regular Monday lunchtime meeting with his Home Office ministerial team.

He was there two days ago with his colleagues planning his week ahead, yet ignoring the biggest decision he has to take. Downstairs his officials were already working on representations from supporters of General Pinochet. José Miguel Insulza, the Chilean Foreign Minister, and opponents that included groups re-

presented by Geoffrey Bindman, the leading London civil rights solicitor.

Typically of the diligent Mr Straw, he has not cancelled a single public engagement to devote time to the Pinochet case. Only hours after receiving the papers he made a lengthy visit to the annual awards in memory of Philip Lawrence, the headmaster murdered outside his school in northwest London before attending a conference on terrorism.

But on Monday afternoon, sitting alone at his desk and surrounded by pictures of his wife Alice and children William and Charlotte, the Home Secretary began to work through the representations chosen by his officials in the extradition unit from hundreds that have flooded into the Home Office.

When he has wanted to query a point, Mr Straw has called in those officials, the Home Office's in-house legal advisers and Ken Sutton, his principal private secretary, one of his closest advisers. If necessary, James Turner, the QC who has followed the case for the Home Office, is on hand. Knowing that his decision would almost certainly face a legal challenge Mr Straw has gone to the utmost lengths to get it right.



Jack Straw at his desk: whatever he decides about General Pinochet will upset a lot of people

THE CASE FOR EXTRADITION

- Labour MPs, many of whom were closely involved in the anti-Pinochet protests of the 1970s, would be pleased and Jack Straw's credentials with the Left would be strengthened.
- Britain would escape charges of being seen as a soft touch for old dictators, a place they could visit with impunity with no fear of proceedings against them.
- Mr Straw would be seen as upholding the legal process, despite the narrowness of the law lords' judgment, against a wave of political pressure, led by a Conservative Party that on this issue has managed to achieve unity.
- Co-operation with the Spanish legal authorities would be enhanced. Police hopes of bringing to justice Kenneth Noye, wanted in connection with the unsolved "road-rage" murder on the M25, would be raised.
- People who have been trying to strengthen internal laws on human rights would regard it as landmark victory.
- Co-operation with progressive political movements in Latin America would be increased.

THE CASE FOR LETTING HIM GO

- Mr Straw and the Government would be avoiding months, possibly years, of legal wrangling because a decision to allow extradition proceedings would without doubt be challenged.
- Britain's relations with Chile, which one of the law lords said would be a proper matter for Mr Straw to consider, would be protected. Chile is considered to be one of this country's better allies outside the Commonwealth.
- The help offered to Britain by Chile during the Falklands war would again be recognised.
- Mr Straw would gain plaudits from the leader writers and diplomats for putting the long-term interests of the country ahead of party interest.
- The process of democracy in Chile would be protected.
- The risk that General Pinochet, unwell and 83, might die in this country and provoke storms of anti-British protests in Chile and elsewhere, would be averted.
- British companies doing business in Chile would be relieved. Contracts have been cancelled in recent weeks.
- The Government would be let off the embarrassing hook of having appeared to welcome him here and then to have allowed him to be arrested.
- The Spanish Government would probably secretly be pleased. Prime ministerial aides in Madrid have suggested that they would be delighted to be spared a lengthy show trial.

Discomfort goes with ministerial hot seat

THE Home Secretary no longer has the power of life and death — a responsibility withdrawn with the end of hanging in 1965 — but Jack Straw's job is no less onerous.

As successive holders of the office can testify, it is the requirement to take judicial decisions that creates the greatest controversy.

In 1995, Michael Howard had to rule on the case of Sally-Anne Croft and Susan Hagan, two British women who were accused of conspiring to murder a US attorney after getting involved with the cult leader Bagwan Shree Rajneesh. Although the women won the support of Tony Blair

and Paddy Ashdown, they were returned to America for trial after Mr Howard rejected all appeals.

Henry Brooke, Home Secretary in the early Sixties, was widely vilified at the time for extraditing a Chief Enahoro under what were derided in Liberal circles as slim grounds.

"The job has, and always will be, one of the most controversial in politics."

In March, Mr Straw got a foretaste of the difficulties of acting in a supposedly non-political sphere. He ruled that Roisin McAisley, the daughter of the civil rights campaigner Bernadette McAis-

key, should not be extradited to Germany because it would be "unjust and oppressive". He reached his decision after receiving medical evidence that she was suffering from post-natal depression after giving birth while on remand over terrorist charges. The decision was condemned as appeasing republicanism by hardline Unionists.

Lord Baker of Dorking believes that it is the Home Secretary's "semi-judicial" role that can cause trouble. "It's a power purely reserved for the Home Secretary to take into account other considerations. It's down to his discretion," he says.

LORD LAMONT of Lerwick, the former Chancellor, yesterday criticised links between Amnesty International and one of the law lords who ruled that General Pinochet should stand trial (Philip Webster writes).

Lord Hoffman, who cast the deciding vote that found General Pinochet was not immune from prosecution, is an unpaid director of Amnesty International Charity Ltd, which is af-

Lamont attacks judge's role

that is playing a prominent and active part in a case".

He conceded that Lord Hoffman had not been directly involved in Amnesty International's campaign to bring proceedings against General Pinochet: "But that is not the point. As you know better than I, justice

has to be seen to be done." Lord Lamont said that there would be public criticism if a minister or MP had not declared an interest in a similar situation. Rules for judges should be "more stringent than those that apply to ministers and MPs since judges are administering justice and making decisions directly affecting individuals".

Amnesty said: "Lord Hoffman has been an unpaid director of Amnesty International Charity Ltd since 1990. He has had no involvement in Amnesty International's campaigning on the Pinochet case." It also confirmed that Lord Hoffman's wife, Gillian, was an administrative assistant for Amnesty International.

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Nobel celebrations can't hide a lack of progress

David Trimble and John Hume's 'victory lap' is looking distinctly premature, writes Martin Fletcher

DAVID TRIMBLE and John Hume will fly into Oslo for two days of Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies this morning as Tony Blair continues urgent talks in Downing Street to prevent the Good Friday accord from unravelling.

The two laureates will arrive on an American industrialist's private jet after being feted at two other ceremonies for Northern Ireland's political leaders in Boston and Washington this week. Back in the Province, however, this "victory lap" looks distinctly premature and sources said it was causing raised eyebrows within the Government.

The Good Friday accord was essentially a declaration of intent, not an end in itself, and, nearly eight months after it was clinched, no executive has been formed, the cross-border bodies have yet to be agreed, and neither the republican nor loyalist paramilitary organisations have handed in one bullet.

This transition period was supposed to pave the way for a smooth transfer of powers from London in less than eight weeks' time, but unless an

agreement on the executive and cross-border bodies can be clinched before Christmas, the transfer will inevitably be postponed.

Mr Blair met John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, yesterday; today he will meet Seamus Mallon, the Deputy First Minister, and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator. Mr Taylor emerged from his talks to say that the parties were now "within an ace" of an agreement. But Mr McGuinness left a separate meeting in Dublin with Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, talking of a "crisis", and Mr Blair will be banking on nothing.

He flew into Belfast last Wednesday for several hours of talks and left for London shortly before 1am on Thursday, confident that a deal was within sight. Mr Mallon went further, publicly suggesting a deal had been reached. But the whole thing fell apart that afternoon when Mr Trimble faced a rebellion as he addressed the UUP's 28-strong assembly party.

The assemblymen felt rushed and ill-informed. They



Hume will accept joint Nobel Peace Prize

were angered by Mr Mallon's premature declaration. They recoiled from the idea of forming eight cross-border bodies, especially if Mr Trimble was ready to accept nationalist demands for ten ministries instead of seven.

Unionists see cross-border bodies as a back route to Irish unity and want them limited to six. They would choose three: waterways, marine matters and food safety. The nationalist SDLP could have tourism, European Union matters and trade bodies.

Mr Blair was left "spitting blood" at Mr Trimble's apparent failure to deliver. Sources said Mr Trimble and Mr Mallon had a confrontation in one of their offices that "went beyond the ordinary give and

take of politics", and that relations between these two key men were decidedly frosty. Mr Trimble's relations with his own assembly party also suffered, and with an overall pro-accord majority of just two on the Unionist side of the assembly, he can ill afford to alienate anyone.

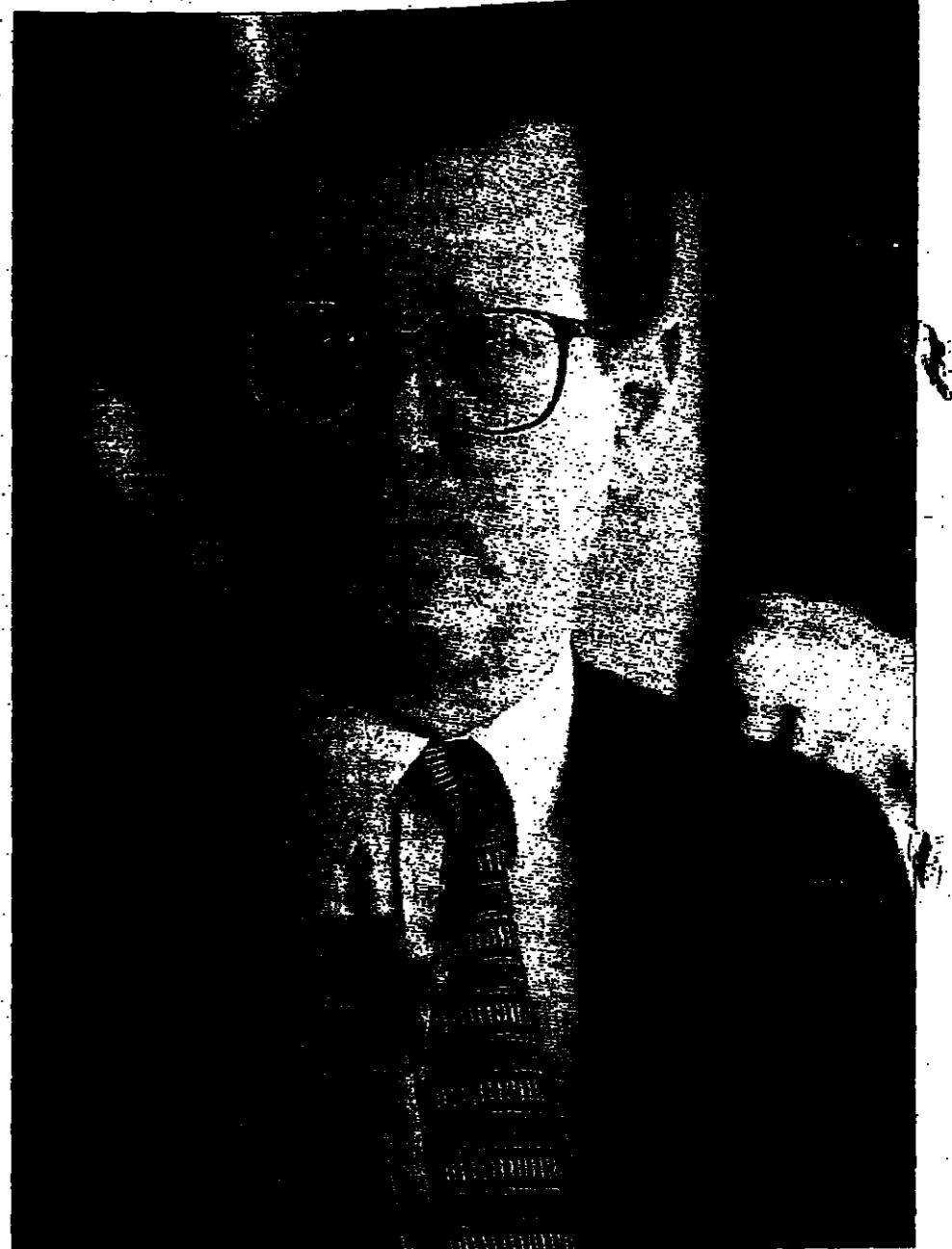
Even if Mr Blair does conjure an agreement on the executive and cross-border bodies, the single biggest obstacle to the accord's implementation would remain, because Mr Trimble will not actually form an executive that includes Sinn Fein until the IRA begins disarming. However, London and Dublin believe such an agreement would put intense pressure on the IRA to fulfil its side of the bargain, and in anticipation of an agreement last week, the IRA organised a rare army convention to consider what to do. In the event, it was left off the hook and took no decision on weapons.

There would be still more pressure if the Loyalist Volunteer Force keeps its promise publicly to destroy a small amount of weaponry before Christmas, now that the Government has made its prisoners eligible for early release. Reports yesterday said the international disarmament commission had issued the necessary certificates of immunity. But the IRA's intentions are

impossible to read. The Dublin-based *Irish Independent* yesterday reported that it was ready to approve a symbolic gesture on decommissioning provided cross-border bodies, and a ten-person executive with two seats for Sinn Fein, were agreed. This would probably consist of the supervised destruction of some Semtex. In the event, Mr McGuinness said he attached no credence to that report, and the *Irish Times* quoted republican sources as firmly rejecting even a partial handover of weapons or explosives.

Twice this year the IRA has issued statements rejecting decommissioning, which republicans consider an act of surrender. A two-thirds majority of delegates to an army convention would be required to sanction it and Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, has insisted he cannot deliver it.

Even if the decommissioning issue is finally resolved, the problems will not be over. Making the new structures work effectively will be fiendishly difficult. More than a year after Sinn Fein first entered the Stormont talks, there is still a total lack of trust, indeed a presumption of bad faith, between Unionists and republicans, and the various parties have been able to agree nothing without government intervention.



David Trimble speaking about the peace process on his visit to Washington this week

IRA appeals for help in finding victims

By Our Chief Ireland Correspondent

THE IRA issued an extraordinary appeal yesterday for help in finding the bodies of people it abducted, killed and buried secretly during the 1970s.

"We urge anyone with information that may be of assistance in identifying the grave of any of these people to pass this information to ourselves or to the family of the person concerned," the IRA said in a statement to Belfast's nationalist *Irish News*.

"Any information passed to the IRA concerning these matters will be treated in strictest confidence and without prejudice to the source."

There are at least 14 of the so-called disappeared still unaccounted for, and perhaps many more whose families dare not speak out or believe that their husbands and sons were killed.

The IRA has come under growing pressure to disclose

where they are buried, especially now that IRA prisoners are being freed. In August it admitted responsibility for some of the deaths and announced that it had set up a unit under a senior officer to find the graves, but cautioned that "the time lapse, changes in leadership and the deaths of republican personnel had rendered this task extremely difficult".

Last Friday Helen McKendry, whose mother was abducted from her West Belfast flat in 1972 after comforting a dying soldier, revealed that the IRA had recently met her and admitted the murder.

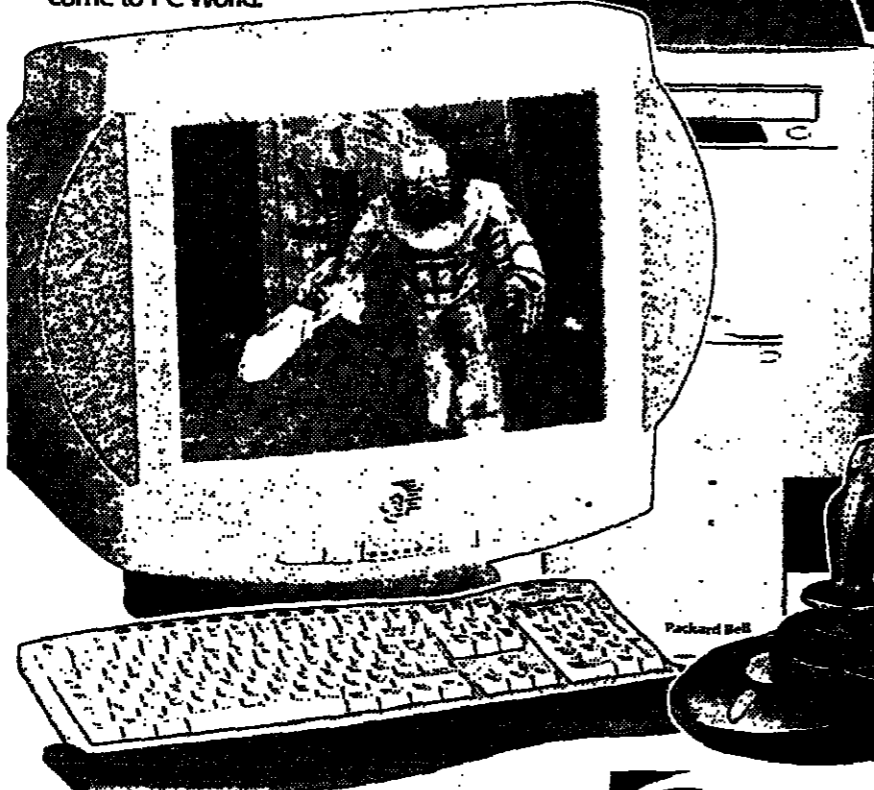
Most of the "disappeared" are people from nationalist areas who upset the IRA, but they also include Robert Nairac, the SAS captain seized outside a South Armagh pub while working undercover in 1977.

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Wives to take over as breadwinners

Men of future will do chores and childcare, reports Alexandra Freen

WOMEN will become the main earners in at least half of all households by 2020, according to a report that shows female workers already earn more than their partners in nearly a fifth of all couples.

The *Family Futures* report, commissioned by the banking group Barclays, also predicts that the 20 per cent pay gap between men and women will have disappeared by 2020, when women will make up half of the professional workforce.

Graeme Leach, the report's author, believes that the continued "feminisation" of the workplace will force companies to create a "mother track" career structure for their female employees, ensuring that women who return to work after childbirth do not compromise their chances of promotion because they have had children.

He said: "What sense will it make for the female to give up work, following children, if her earning power is substantially higher than her partner's? Post-2020 women may earn more than men as their flexibility and organisational skills prove more attractive to employers."

According to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics women earn 80 per cent of the average hourly earnings of men and only 73 per cent of men's average weekly earnings. Just 16 per cent of women earn over 10 per cent more than their partners. 2 per cent earn 5 to 10 per cent more and 7 per cent have equal earnings.

Mr Leach, a futurologist

and chief economist at the Institute of Directors, predicts an increasing demand from employers for the brightest women.

He points out that women are already getting better qualifications than men. "Since 1990 there has been a 66 per cent increase in women full-time undergraduates, compared with a 50 per cent rise for men. In 1997, 48 per cent of women achieved an upper second class degree, compared with 40 per cent for men," he said.

One predicted outcome is that men will have to take on more domestic chores. Despite the rapid growth in female employment, women continue to shoulder most household tasks, including care for the young and old — a situation

that will simply become untenable as the labour market grows increasingly competitive. Mr Leach said: "We will see the end of the late 20th-century situation whereby women have gone out to work whilst still retaining the lion's share of domestic chores as well."

As a way of formalising the new division of domestic labour, Mr Leach predicts the rise of "parenting contracts" — signed agreements between couples stating that they will remain together until their children have grown up. The agreements might also specify how much time each parent will spend with their children and which caring tasks they will do.

An increase in home working, particularly among men, will reinforce the domestica-

tion and "downshifting" of fathers. By 2020, Mr Leach predicts that 20 per cent of fathers could be working from home. The trend is likely to start in professional families then spread through society.

These changes may also in part be a response to a deep-felt malaise among many of today's fathers. Two thirds of men today say they want to spend more time with their children, yet only one in 20 has actually cut his working week to make this possible. At least 17 per cent do not see their children every day.

Family structures will also change dramatically. There will be fewer children, as couples become more dependent on two incomes and the cost in lost career opportunities grows for women taking time off to give birth. Women will also choose to have fewer children and to give birth later, as they concentrate more on their careers.

Mr Leach also predicts that teenage children with computer skills may find part-time work as companies discover the benefits in using the skills of an IT-literate generation of youngsters.

One side-effect could be a threat to parental authority: it would be harder to discipline a teenager who is helping maintain the parents' lifestyle.

Also predicted is the rise of the "Walton effect" whereby extended families will live under one roof. The rising cost of caring for both the young and the elderly will make it sensible two or three generations of a family to move in together.



New year revolutions: Simon Robertson with Fionn, three, and twins Tiggy and Ned

Delay in having children grows

By ALEXANDRA FREAN
SOCIAL AFFAIRS
CORRESPONDENT

THE trend for middle-class and professional women to have their children later in life is beginning to spread to women in lower income groups, according to new figures.

The latest quarterly edition of *Population Trends*, published by the Office for National Statistics, confirms the existence of a trickle-down effect of change, as more women make the most of employment before starting a family. The figures show that, in 1987, women in social classes 1 and 2 were on average 3.9 years older than those in classes 4 and 5 when they had their first child within marriage. By 1997, this difference had fallen to 2.6 years. The mean age of women having their first child was 30.2 in the richest two groups in 1997 and 27.6 in the poorest two groups.

The mean age of mothers at the birth of their first child increased by about two years from 24.3 years in 1976 to 26.8 years in 1997.

Women generally are having fewer children. Those born in the late 1930s, who were in their late twenties during the 1960s baby boom, had an average of 2.4 children. Since then the average family size has fallen to less than 2.1 children for the 1952 cohort. One reason for this is likely to be that more women are remaining childless. Less than 12 per cent of women born in the 1940s were childless by the age of 45. This is expected to rise to 23 per cent for those born in 1972.

The teenage conception rate, which fell from 69.1 per thousand girls aged 15-19 to 58.7 between 1990 and 1991, rose to 63 in 1996. This is attributable to the 1995 "third generation" Pill scare, which led many to stop taking it.

Britain's total population was estimated to be 52.2 million at mid-1997, a year-on-year rise of 201,000.

AND HOW WAS YOUR DAY, DEAR?

The changing attitudes to family life highlighted in *Family Futures* is illustrated by the following quotes from relationship books:

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The Good Wife's Guide, a home-economics book from the 1950s

"Remember that there is only one difference between you. You can bear children. In every other respect you are equals. The distribution of responsibilities at home will inevitably reflect responsibilities in the workplace. If you both work equally outside the home, then you both should work equally inside it."

The Good Partner's Guide, a 2020 lifestyle textbook by Graeme Leach

Family finances mean father is left holding the babies

Alexandra Freen talks to a couple who have decided to reverse the traditional roles

KIM CRAWFORD, 37, and Simon Robertson, 43, made a conscious decision to have children later in their married life, believing that their emotional maturity would benefit their children.

Mr Robertson, who runs a delicatessen in Battersea, South London, is preparing to sell his business and become a full-time house-husband in January, taking over responsibility for the care of the couple's three children, Fionn, three, and twins

Tiggy and Ned, aged four months.

The decision to give up work was an easy one. Last January, Ms Crawford set up her own design recruitment company, which swiftly became a success, giving her a bigger income than her husband.

"I don't think it is fair on the children if both of us go to work every day," Mr Robertson said. "It is too

hard to juggle careers and your family, and that is why I have decided to become a house-husband. Kim's business is successful and we are fortunate that she earns enough for this to be a realistic proposition."

Mr Robertson, who looked after Fionn for one or two days a week during his first year, does not believe he will have much trouble fit-

ting in with the mothers, nannies and au pairs on the local playgroup circuit. Many of the mothers are regular customers of his.

Although she considers herself lucky to have a husband who already does a good deal of the domestic duties, Ms Crawford cannot be certain that she will not come home from work to find a pile of

chores. "There are just some things that women do better than men. I can do three washes, dry the clothes, fold them and put them away in the time it takes him to do one. I am going to have to train him how to do it. Maybe I will have to be cruel to be kind and just let the laundry pile up if he doesn't do it." Although she conceded that her

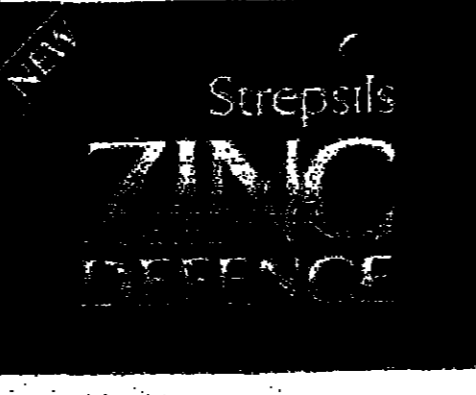
husband may start to hanker after paid employment, Ms Crawford insisted that if he did go back to work, it would have to be to a job that was not "all-consuming".

"One of us has always to be on call for the children. Somebody has to be there at 5.30pm or when they come home from school. While the children are young one of us has to not have a career. It has to be him, not me, because my business has more potential," she said.



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A point of order on path to reforming House of Lords

The debate over House of Lords reform has so far missed the main point. Who sits in a second chamber is secondary to its function and powers. Whether a second chamber should be elected or nominated, with regions or special interests represented, is getting decisions the wrong way round. The prior question is, what do you want a second chamber to do?

Ministers and Tory spokesmen have been vague, either referring to maintaining existing powers or ensuring that any replacement House is at least as independent as

the existing one. But that begs the central questions. At present, the Lords has extensive powers which go much further than its self-proclaimed role as a revising chamber. The Upper House could reject all government Bills, apart from financial ones, subject to the constraints of the 1911 and 1949 Parliament Acts. It could delay all non-financial bills by up to a year.

However, the Lords has accepted the self-imposed constraint of the Salisbury/Addison convention about not opposing at second reading measures in the governing party's manifesto. Moreover, the Upper

House has also generally accepted that it will press the Commons to think again on amendments two or, at most, three times.

Most peers recognise that their lack of democratic legitimacy means that they cannot be seen to overrule the will of the elected House. But that convention was breached three weeks ago when William Hague insisted that Tory peers reject the closed-list provisions of the European elections Bill an unprecedented five times.

Sustaining these conventions and self-imposed constraints will be impossible in a House that re-

gards itself as more legitimate, as the interim chamber may do and the fully reformed House (probably with some elected element) cer-

tainly will. Such a chamber may use the existing powers of the Upper House more fully in amending legislation, leading to conflict with the Commons. This possibility is

likely to fuel opposition to reform in the Commons, as it did 30 years ago when Enoch Powell and Michael Foot fatally weakened the Crossman plan.

Reformers still have to answer the question posed then by Mr Powell: "Reform is commended on two distinct and contradictory grounds. One is in order to prevent the Upper House from frustrating or unduly delaying the decisions and wishes of this House. The other ground is to enable the Upper House to be a more effective check upon the proceedings of this House, and to hold a more convincing

balance against it." The main parties accept that the Commons should continue to be the superior House, but how far should the second chamber be formally recognised as a check and balance? Should there be formal procedures, such as joint committees of both Houses, to resolve conflicts? Assuming that the second chamber continues to be excluded from debating financial measures, should it have a special role in other areas, for instance, on constitutional Bills or on issues affecting the devolved legislatures?

A reformed second chamber could have powers to block constitutional changes until after a further general election, or until they had been approved in a referendum. Such a chamber might perform the "checking" role that the judges might otherwise assume. It is asking a lot of any royal commission, however distinguished its members, to decide on these issues from scratch. The Government itself needs to give a lead, preferably after talks with the other main parties. Only when agreement is reached on the role and powers of the second chamber does it make sense to consider its composition.



Peter RIDDELL ON POLITICS

Grandad suffered too, says minister

PETER MANDELSON compared himself yesterday to his grandfather whose name was "shoved, kicked and dragged through the mud" in pursuit of a landmark project (Roland Watson writes).

The Trade Secretary invoked Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary in charge of the 1951 Festival of Britain, to confront the "critics and snipers" of the Millennium Dome. Mr Mandelson, the minister in charge of the dome, said his grandfather had been as much the victim as he was now of those how have "carped and griped through the ages".

Referring to the festival, he said: "People said it was a waste of money, it was too futuristic and not what people wanted. Gosh, how the pundits, the so-called experts, underestimate other people's intelligence and others' sense of imagination never ceases to amaze me." Mr Mandelson urged critics to visit the Greenwich site before attacking the £750 million project again. "Listen to the comments of people as they marvel at the sheer scale of the dome. Then come and tell me this cannot inspire a nation — and it's not even finished yet."

Labour sceptics start 'fightback' against the euro

By ROLAND WATSON, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

A LABOUR crusade against the single currency gives warning that VAT would be extended to zero-rated goods and the National Health Service abolished if Britain signed up.

The campaign, which claims the support of 80 Labour MPs, accuses the Government of "sleepwalking" into monetary union and calls on the Left to take a stand. Those spearheading the drive are urging sympathetic members to check all government and public documents for bias in favour of the euro.

They also call on Labour MPs to oppose moves led by Jack Straw to water down the recommendations of the Neill committee which would prevent taxpayers' money being used to put the case for entry

during a referendum. The campaign will form the basis of Labour parliamentary opposition to the euro. Organisers want to mount an internal argument as vigorous as that of the Tories and also plan to dovetail their efforts with Tory and anti-EMU businesses.

The drive, backed by Austin Mitchell, the MP for Grimsby, and Lord Shore of Stepney, the former Cabinet minister, was launched yesterday. It is based on the Labour Safeguards Committee which was the focus for anti-Common market-ers in the 1975 referendum.

A pamphlet which echoes many of the warnings about tax rises raised last week will be sent to Labour MPs, trade unions and constituency parties. They will be urged to com-

plain about any minister who talks about "when" we join the single currency rather than "if", a reference to Peter Mandelson's remarks to the CBI conference last month.

The document, written by Richard Heller, a journalist and former Labour aide, describes monetary union as "unilateral economic disarmament" and argues that the benefits are far outweighed by the risks.

It adds that the worst that could befall Britain if it stays out is that the country might not be as rich as it could be. But it claims the UK's economy and democracy would be destroyed if the euro went wrong with us as members.

The sceptics say that VAT would be extended to all British goods currently exempt, including transport fares, children's clothes, books, newspapers and magazines. The document adds that the NHS would be at risk as soon as a majority of countries decided it was wrong to have one.

Mr Heller said the aim was "to show you don't have to be a right-wing xenophobe or business-orientated to reject the euro".

He said: "The Labour Party has been so delighted with victory that it has been acquiescent over the stealthy march into the euro. But no longer. The fightback starts here."

HAGUE'S NEW TEAM IN LORDS

WILLIAM HAGUE yesterday announced five new appointments to the Opposition frontbench team in the Lords. The move follows last week's resignations by frontbenchers after the sacking of Viscount Cranborne. Earl Aulsebrook becomes Northern Ireland spokesman, while Lord Cope of Berkley, a life peer and former minister, takes over

the Home Affairs portfolio. Baroness Denton of Wakefield, a former junior minister, becomes trade and industry spokesman. Lord Dixon-Smith is the new spokesman for local government on the Environment, Transport and the Regions team, while Lord Astor of Hever joins the Opposition Whips' office on health and social security briefs.



Geoffrey Robinson at the launch of a business for young people project yesterday

Robinson telephone listing still in question

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

GEOFFREY Robinson yesterday appeared to be the victim of an error which resulted in him being listed in the *Yellow Pages* as a political consultant.

But Mr Robinson's entry in the Central London edition embarrassed the Government at a time when the minister's future was already in doubt. The Tories called for his resignation. A Treasury spokesman maintained that the listing was an error and that the minister's name should have been under "political organisations". But he was unable to explain why Mr Robinson had, for the first time, decided to accept a free listing, particularly as he has none in his Coventry North West constituency.

It was also unclear last night whether the error had been made by *Yellow Pages* or by the MP's office. Neither admitted responsibility.

Three other MPs were also wrongly listed as political consultants, although no complaint was made until Mr Robinson's listing was disclosed in *The Times* yesterday. They were Ben Bradshaw, Labour MP for Exeter, Jim Cunningham, Labour MP for Coventry South and Dominic Grieve, Tory MP for Beaconsfield.

Yellow Pages admitted that the MPs had been wrongly listed, but insisted that the entries accurately reflected data on the computer system. "An error was made but we do not know if it was us or them."

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Kidnap business turns a grim profit

Murderous hostage-takers have revived a long tradition after war with Russia wiped out the Chechen economy, reports Anna Blundy from Moscow

THE discovery of the mutilated bodies of three Britons and a New Zealand citizen, the first Western hostages to be murdered in the breakaway republic of Chechnya, is yet another grim reminder of the lawlessness and violence that has beset the area since the end of the 1994-1996 war of independence.

There are still more than 100 hostages, mostly Russian and Chechen, being held for ransom in Chechnya despite continued efforts on the part of Chechen authorities to put an end to the kidnappings and murders for which the republic is now internationally notorious.

Russian bombardments reduced Grozny, the Chechen capital, to little more than a heap of rubble and the republic was left poverty stricken, awash with arms and with no hope of work for the men who had spent the war exchanging hostages. Chechen commanders would trade Russian soldiers for their own captives, weapons or ammunition. As many as 188 Russian soldiers were taken hostage during the war. They are released regularly in ones and twos, although most still remain in captivity.



Once hostilities ended the Chechens continued their hostage-taking activities in the hope of making a living, but directed their attention towards civilians instead of soldiers. Suddenly the foreign journalists, who had been well-treated by the Chechens during the war, became targets. With the abduction of Mauro Galligani, an Italian photographer, in 1996, hostilities against foreigners began and Chechnya has been a no-go area ever since, although a few British charity workers still live and work in Grozny. Mr Galligani was released after the payment of a \$300,000 (£185,000) ransom which the Italian Embassy wrote off as "expenses". Kidnapping is nothing new

in the Caucasus. In the 19th century the rebel Imam Shamil held a Georgian princess and her entourage hostage for two months in a bid to force the Russian Tsar to release Shamil's son, who was in prison at the royal court in St Petersburg. Russians are fond of quoting Mikhail Lermontov's 19th Century poem *Cossack Lullaby* which describes "the wicked Chechen" who "creeps up the river bank and sharpens his dagger". Nowadays the kidnappings seem more prosaic, although many hostages are still released upon payment of ransoms.

The Foreign Office denied that any payment was made for the release of Jon James and Camilla Carr, freed in September after 14 months in captivity, but the involvement of Boris Berezovsky, Russia's most influential tycoon and a man known to have paid massive ransoms for the release of hostages from Chechnya in the past, suggested that a deal of some kind may have been struck with the hostage takers. Galina Kovalskaya, an expert on Chechen affairs for *Foreign Affairs* magazine, says: "The most obvious reason for the death of a hostage is refusal to pay the ransom. If a hostage were released without payment the whole industry would collapse."

She cites the example of two wealthy Chechen businessmen who were kidnapped last year with their young Russian driver. It was clear that no ransom would be paid for the boy and his body was soon discovered. His murder hastened the release of his employers and the kidnappers claimed another victory. The release last month of Valentin Vlasov, President Yeltsin's special envoy to Chechnya, who had been in captivity since May 1, came shortly after the gruesome discovery of the body of



Chechen rebels who fought for independence from Moscow have turned their attention to abducting foreigners as a way of making a living

Akmal Saidov, a Russian government official, on the border of the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia.

Many Chechens, including Aslan Maskhadov, the President, believe the Russian secret services and Chechen political rivals are behind the kidnappings in an attempt to dis-

credit the present regime. While this may be true in certain cases, it is clear that most abductions are carried out for financial reasons.

Ms Kovalskaya says that the problem of hostage-taking persists because of the strong links between the Chechen Government and the hostage

takers. "It is not that kidnapping is government policy, but they need the money," she says. "There is no other way of financing the budget." She points to Vice-President Valcha Arsanov, who was responsible for the exchange of prisoners during the war. "Although it would be wrong to accuse him

directly, everyone knows that his network remains." The professionalism of the kidnappings is widely acknowledged. Hostages are moved often and sometimes kept in caves where outlaws hid a century ago. Negotiations follow a similar pattern of months of silence, then

photographs, letters or a videotape and then weeks later the ransom demand. This makes it all the more surprising that these hostages were killed, only three months after their capture. No ransom demand is known to have been made.

Leading article, page 21



Jon James and Camilla Carr were held in Chechnya for 14 months but were freed unharmed in September

Families speak of their prayers and disbelief

By DANIEL MCGROSKY AND CLAUDIA JOSEPH

THE telephone call was all too brief, but it was enough to give four families hope that their loved ones were alive. Five days ago, the relatives of the four telecommunication engineers held for nine weeks by Chechen gunmen dared to believe they could be home for Christmas.

They were sworn to secrecy about the surprise call on a satellite telephone, just as they were asked to say nothing about the complicated deal being worked out for the men's freedom.

Each man, Darren Hickey, Rudolf Petschi, Peter Kennedy and Stan Shaw, a New Zealander, used what precious

time they were allowed by their kidnappers to send messages of love and reassurance to their worried families.

Those families spoke yesterday of their shock at the deaths. Darren Hickey lived with his parents at their pub, the Crown Inn, Thames Ditton, which was still festooned in yellow ribbons last night in anticipation of his release. His sister, Deborah, said: "We were told that it would be OK, but after today I won't believe anything anymore."

Rudolf Petschi and his wife, Louisa, had recently moved into a new house on the Padbrook estate in Chiltonpton, Devon. His father, Johann Pet-

tschi, known as John, who lives nearby in Tiverton was mourning the death of his wife Val when he learned of his son's abduction two months ago.

The oldest of the group, Stan Shaw, lived with his wife Lily and four-year-old daughter, Priscilla, in Addlestone, Surrey. A neighbour who spoke to Mrs Shaw yesterday said: "She is devastated but she is not blaming Granger Telecom. She has said a prayer of forgiveness for the kidnappers."

Peter Kennedy, who was married with a daughter and lived in Hereford, had worked for British Telecom but was on contract to Granger Telecom.



Khatami trying to give Iran a moderate image

Iran hires germ war experts

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

IRAN has recruited impoverished Russian scientists from laboratories linked to Moscow's biological weapons, provoking fears that Tehran is developing a germ arsenal.

An investigation by *The New York Times* found that at least five Russian germ scientists were working in Iran, which now has a moderate leader in President Khatami, and that others have contracts allowing them to conduct research for Tehran from Russia.

□ Nicosia: The first test of Iraq's pledge to co-operate with UN weapons inspectors began yesterday when experts began surprise visits to suspect sites.

Russia's Jews in plea to the West

By RICHARD BEESTON

LEADING Russian Jews appealed to Britain and the West yesterday to help them to fight the increasing threat of anti-Semitism.

After a series of attacks on rabbis and synagogues, and anti-Semitic outbursts in the Russian parliament, Jewish leaders called on Western legislatures to halt all contact with Russian deputies who have failed to condemn racism.

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, said that British Jewry had traditionally intervened on behalf of their Russian brethren as far back as the time of Empress Catherine the Great, and that once again Russian Jews needed support.

In particular, they are looking to the parliaments in London, Strasbourg, Paris and Washington to sever all ties with more than 100 members of the Russian Communist Party who failed to censure a fellow member when he made repeated verbal attacks on Jews.

In October, Albert Makashov, a former Soviet general and a Communist in the Duma, the lower house of parliament, launched a series of anti-Semitic outbursts beginning with a vow to "take at least ten yids" with him if threatened with violence. He accused "yids" of sucking Russian blood, destroying the Russian military and spitting on a country that "saved them from the fires and gas chambers of Fascism". He added: "I will round up all the Jews and send them to the next world." The remarks caused outrage and revulsion among

many in Moscow, but when a motion was put forward in parliament to censure the general for his "harsh, abusive statements" and incitement to racism, deputies defeated it by 121 to 107, with the Communist faction, the largest in parliament, either voting against or abstaining.

Other members of the Communist hierarchy have expressed or hinted at similar opinions, including Gennadi Zyuganov, the party leader, and Nikolai Kondratenko, the powerful regional governor of the southern province of Krasnodar, who accused Jewish girls of seducing Russian boys to control the country's future race.

In modern Russia, the 500,000 Jews make up less than 1 per cent of the population, although prominent members of the Jewish community hold key positions in politics, journalism and the arts.

The current Prime Minister, Yevgeni Primakov, is half Jewish, as was his predecessor, Sergei Kiriyenko. Two of the main political leaders in parliament, Grigori Yavlinsky, the leader of the liberal Yabloko Party, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the head of the ultra-nationalist LDPR, also have Jewish parents.

In business circles, most of the seven so-called oligarchs who financed President Yeltsin's successful presidential election campaign in 1996, were Jewish, including Boris Berezovsky, the high-profile media tycoon who is often the target of anti-Semitic attacks.

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US and Israeli security chiefs clash over Clinton

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

AMERICAN Secret Service agents are concerned that Islamic militants might mount a devastating car or lorry bomb raid, similar to the suicide attacks in the summer against US embassies in Africa, when President Clinton visits the Middle East on Saturday.

An Israeli official involved in the huge counter-terrorism exercise in operation said that US fears of such an attack by Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, or a group linked to Osama bin Laden, the renegade Saudi millionaire, had led to sharp differences between Israeli and American security chiefs. "They are verging on paranoia and are making security requests that are impossible to meet," said the official who refused to be identified.

The main worries of American and Israeli security experts are that Islamic militants might attempt to launch either a spectacular suicide

attack against one of the buildings where Mr Clinton will stop in Gaza or against the Jerusalem Hilton, where he will stay for three nights. The newly opened hotel is situated at the junction of the city's main thoroughfares, which are difficult to close without causing traffic chaos.

Israel Radio reported yesterday that US Marines had arrived to carry out their first exercise connected with the presidential visit. In Gaza City, Palestinian armoured personnel carriers have been deployed outside the convention centre where Mr Clinton is to address 1,500 Palestinian delegates. All streets around the hall will be sealed later this week.

The Israeli official said: "Apart from a Kenyan-type attack, which could bring down large parts of even a heavily guarded building, there is the possibility that terrorists determined to take advantage of the publicity potential may try to launch

a missile attack against Clinton's motorcade or helicopter." He said the mood among the Secret Service agents billeted in the Hilton was one of utter nervousness.

The Hebrew paper *Kol Hair* said: "The Americans are demanding closing many streets in the city centre and Rehavia (the smartest residential district) ... The Americans also noted the possibility of an attack by right-wing Jewish radicals, who regard Clinton as responsible for the Wye (peace) agreement."

The future of the accord, central to the Clinton visit, was in serious doubt as a senior aide of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, said it was unlikely that the next West Bank withdrawal by Israeli troops would take place as scheduled on December 18. Hardline Israeli coalition parties have pressured him to freeze the deal as the price for keeping him in power.



An FBI photo used in a Mafia trial shows, from left, Gregory DePalma, Frank Sinatra, Thomas Marston, Carlo Gambino, Jimmy "The Weasel" Fratianno and, seated, Richard "Nerves" Fusco in a dressing room at New York's Westchester Theatre in 1976

Files show FBI linked Sinatra to Chicago Mafia

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

SEVEN months after his death, Frank Sinatra's FBI records were released yesterday in a file several inches thick. It chronicles five decades of lurid allegations, as well as valid claims of his ties to the Mafia.

The 1,275 pages of FBI material follow the course of investigations into the singer's links to organised crime as well as a baseless report that he paid \$40,000 to avoid being called up during the Second World War.

The papers also record an investigation carried out on the orders of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI Director of the era, into allegations that the singer had links to the Communist Party.

Although full of half-truths and innuendos, the papers were released after American news organisations filed requests under the Freedom of Information Act after the singer's death from a heart attack in May.

The papers show that the FBI had active files on Sinatra throughout the postwar years because of his friends in the Chicago Mafia.

The singer always denied such links, including a denial under oath before the Nevada Gaming Board; nevertheless he consented to be photographed repeatedly with such well known mobsters as Paul Castellano and his good

friend Sam Giancana. Ol' Blue Eyes's fondness for the Mafia tarnished another friendship that he cherished, that with President Kennedy.

The allegation that Sinatra tried to avoid being called up first surfaced in a gossip item published by Walter Winchell. The FBI noted it, investigated and eventually dropped the matter.

The singer likewise was never firmly linked to the Com-

'Informer told Hoover that singer was Communist Party member'

munist Party despite an informer's report to Hoover that he was a member.

Sources said yesterday that Sinatra saw his FBI files long before he died, having filed Freedom of Information Act requests in 1979 and 1980.

Little of what was released yesterday will come as a shock to his biographers, but his family is unlikely to welcome publication of one item: a 1938 New Jersey police mugshot taken after his arrest on charges of seduction.



Raphael Lopez, a senior US Customs officer in south Florida, holds the piece of confiscated Moon rock

Space station hums into life

BY JAMES BONS AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THE International Space Station sprang to life late on Monday during a 7½-hour spacewalk that began what is expected to be five years of daring construction in orbit.

Jerry Ross and Jim Newman worked on the structure docked to the space shuttle Endeavour, connecting 40 cables that carried electricity, data and computer commands through station segments that were linked on Sunday.

"Yesterday we put the skeleton together," Bob Castle, the lead flight director, said. "Today we hooked up the first parts of the nervous system."

The astronauts took just four hours to complete the couplings between the US-built Unity module and the Russian Zarya power station: the flight directors had expected that the complex operation would keep

the two men busy for five or six hours.

As work got under way on the space station, Miami customs agents seized a lump of Moon rock brought to Earth by the crew of Apollo 17 after it was offered for sale for \$5 million (£3 million). The 3.9-billion-year-old rock was given to the Honduran Government after America's last manned Moon mission, in 1972.

Selling the tiny stone is not illegal, but it is believed to have been smuggled into the United States illegally. After a man contacted an Apollo 17 astronaut about the rock, undercover agents placed an advertisement seeking Moon rocks. A Florida man named Alafi Rosen told them that he had obtained the lunar memento from a Honduran retired officer. He was not charged.

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Nato rejects call to cut nuclear arms

THE three nuclear powers in Nato closed ranks yesterday as Germany called on the alliance to move more purposefully towards disarmament to set an example to the countries aspiring to obtain weapons of mass destruction.

In his debut appearance at a Nato foreign ministers' meeting at alliance headquarters, Joschka Fischer said it was time to create "a climate of disarmament". The German Foreign Minister told the gathering, hosted by Javier Solana, the Secretary-General, that the big nuclear powers should stop "theological discussions about nuclear weapons" and produce "definite results" on disarmament.

After the German Government's declaration that it would like Nato to adopt a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons, which the alliance has always rejected, the latest intervention by Herr Fischer was seen as a bold attempt to persuade the US, Britain and France to adopt a significantly reduced nuclear posture.

However, his attempts to change Nato's nuclear policy met with little sympathy from other non-nuclear alliance members and polite indifference from the three nuclear



A German call for disarmament has been politely rebuffed, Michael Evans, Defence Editor, writes from Brussels

powers. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said the Government's strategic defence review, published in July, "affirmed our commitment to the present nuclear posture of Nato and we see no need for a change in that posture".

Mr. Cook pointed out that the British Government had already taken its own disarmament steps with the announcement in July that the number of warheads carried by each Trident ballistic missile submarine would not exceed 48. The previous Government's maximum limit of warheads per boat was 96.

Madeline Albright, the US Secretary of State, also showed no interest in meeting Herr Fischer's demands. "We have the right nuclear strategy and I don't believe that it is necessary to change it," Ms Albright said. She added that the United States was involved in a "radical" disarmament programme with the Start pro-

cess. Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister, said it was "natural" for Nato to debate such issues and it was important to maintain deterrence at the lowest level. "But that's what France does already," he said.

The gentle rebuff for the German Foreign Minister, who is the leader of the Green Party in the ruling coalition, did not seem to worry him. British sources insisted that Herr Fischer's call for more progressive nuclear disarmament by Nato was a "low profile" affair at the "tail end" of a working lunch. He later gave a robust press conference in which he claimed he had been supported by one or two Nato colleagues. He said the alliance was developing a new strategic concept which would be unveiled at the next summit in Washington in April and he challenged Nato to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons.

The last strategic concept was drawn up in 1991. Nato then called nuclear weapons "weapons of last resort" but member nations rejected a "no first use" policy because it was felt this would reduce the credibility of deterrents.

Herr Fischer said the new strategic concept would dictate the alliance's defence posture for the 21st century. Yet "nothing new" was coming out of Washington on nuclear policy. He felt it was important to begin a "step-by-step" disarmament strategy.

The biggest threat facing the alliance, he said, was the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. More nuclear disarmament among the big powers was also a key factor to set the right example, he said.

Two non-nuclear Nato members, Canada and The Netherlands, gave their support to the present strategy of relying on an "appropriate mix" of nuclear and conventional arms.



Javier Solana and Robin Cook at the meeting of Nato foreign ministers in Brussels yesterday

Serbs lose grip as Kosovo rebels prepare to fight again

FROM TOM WALKER IN PODUJEVO

GUERRILLA gunfire rattled over the snowclad landscape of northern Kosovo yesterday, another reminder to Belgrade that under the prying eyes of Nato and international monitors, Serbia's grip on its cherished province is slipping.

"It is an early Christmas party, it is December after all," a well equipped and relaxed Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) officer said. He guarded a sandbagged guerrilla position on the mountain slopes above Podujevo, a ramshackle market town on the vital and now very vulnerable province with Serbia's second city, Nis, and the motorway to Belgrade.

It is the increasing isolation of Serb civilians and police officers alike in communities

such as Podujevo that is tempting hardliners within the Government to order another offensive against the KLA.

On Monday Tomislav Nikolic, the Deputy Prime Minister, complained that the "verifiers" working for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe were failing to check the advance of the KLA through the countryside.

"If Albanian terrorists are allowed to murder and kidnap, then we shall have to conduct the same action again as this summer," he said. "But this time we shall go to the end, regardless of what others think."

His outburst met with a swift riposte from Xavier Solana, the Nato Secretary-General, who reminded Mr. Nikolic from Brussels that Serbia still

faced airstrikes if any such action were taken. But as Belgrade dithers over a land it seems doomed to lose, the KLA is making the most of what most diplomats concede is only the customary Balkan winter lull in fighting.

"I don't care what they say in Belgrade," the KLA officer said. "This is where I was born, this is my land." In the dismal streets of Podujevo, a town where any civic pride collapsed decades ago, a drunken police officer said: "This is where I was born, too, but after dark I can't go anywhere."

□ **Banja Luka, Bosnia:** A British soldier with the Nato-led peacekeepers in Bosnia was killed yesterday in an accident in the southwestern town of Mrkonjic Grad. (AFP)



A truffle-lover tests the scent of a "black diamond" on sale at the market in Laibenne, known as the capital of truffles, in southwest France

'Black diamond' faces extinction

The mysterious decline of the truffle threatens a traditional way of life, Ben Macintyre writes

THE southern French truffle, a jewel of gastronomy since Roman times, is now almost extinct, according to truffle-gatherers who say the aromatic fungus has become so rare and expensive that it is barely worth looking for.

At the annual Saint-Alvère market in the Dordogne on Monday, just 28 lbs of knobby Perigord truffles were on sale, and prices soared to an astonishing £200 a pound for the best specimens.

"In mourning for the truffle," declared a headline in the newspaper *France-Soir*, which announced: "There are no more truffles, or practically none, and this lack is prompting both a minor economic eruption and a real social crisis" in the parts of the Lot and Dordogne regions where truffle-hunting was once an important industry and a popular pastime.

Many rural people who used to collect truffles to supplement agricultural incomes have now abandoned the truffle hunt altogether, since soaring prices have shrunk the truffle market dramatically.

To make matters worse, the French truffle industry is facing a major challenge from Italian and, above all, Chinese truffles, which are both plentiful and far cheaper, if less tasty.

At the turn of the century the southern plateau, known as Le Causse, was producing 500 tonnes of the "black diamonds" which played such a key role in the development of French cuisine, and even in 1960 some 80 tonnes were still being shipped annually. By last year the harvest had dropped to just six tonnes, and the 1998-1999 truffle season is expected to produce a minuscule haul of barely 6,600 lbs of truffles.

The poor production this year has been blamed on an

abnormally cool summer, but one of the principal difficulties with truffle production is that scientists remain uncertain quite what makes the Perigord truffle, or *Tuber melanosporum*, grow — or fail to grow.

"One year they say there is too much summer rain; the next that there is too much sun; this year it's too cold," complained Jean Duvigneaud at the end-of-year fair in Quercy. "The fact is, nobody really has a clue."

Some truffle-hunters, who normally use pigs or dogs to locate and grub up the fungi, believe that progressive rural depopulation has led to the abandoning of traditional oak-

wood truffle patches. On the other hand, much of the depopulated land has returned to scrub woodland, including oak, which ought to have encouraged the return of fungi, but has not.

Truffle-hunters are now calling on the French government to preserve a crucial aspect of southern rural life, not to mention a uniquely delicious element of French cooking, by launching a more thorough scientific investigation into the reasons behind the disappearance of the truffle.

The experts at the National Research Institute (INRA) don't even know how truffles grow, but by contrast they know absolutely everything

about genetically modified crops," M Duvigneaud said. "Here, even when there were no truffles around, one could always hope that they would turn up under the oak tree in the garden. But today you cannot say that any more: there just aren't any more where," M Duvigneaud said.

Black truffles are to the Perigord region what wine is to Bordeaux or mustard is to Dijon, and many in the region fear that their identity is vanishing along with the coveted fungus. "We are being made to look like fools in the eyes of Parisians, and we don't like it," M Duvigneaud declared.

The truffles have become so rare, and prices so high, that competition to find what few fungi remain has become increasingly fierce. A good truffle-dog is a passport to considerable wealth, and last year saw a rash of dog thefts from rural kennels. In one incident, a champion truffle dog was poisoned, apparently to eliminate the competition.

A third of all French truffles are imported, and a prime specimen that fetches £200 on the French market may be sold for four times that amount in Japan.

In 1994 Dr. Azad Khanaga, a Kurdish-born scientist, claimed to have produced the first test-tube truffles in his laboratory in Hanover after 14 years of experimentation, but the black truffle remains the world's most mysterious mushroom.

Aficionados of the "holy of holies" dismiss tasteless Chinese imposter

Paris: Imported Chinese truffles sell for one fifth of the price of the genuine Perigord variety, but the suggestion that they are in any way comparable is likely to send any genuine French gourmet chef reaching for the nearest cleaver (Ben Macintyre writes).

The Chinese *Tuber himalayensis* may look rather like the warty Perigord truffle, and it may even smell similar to the delicacy once described by the writer Alexandre Dumas as the "holy of holies", but one bite and the difference is plain, according to French food experts.

The *Tuber melanosporum* from southern France has a distinctive, pungent taste of damp earth, where its Chinese cousin, discovered in the provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan some four years ago, has been compared in taste and texture to a boiled car tyre.

There are also Italian truffles and even an English variety, but in France a truffle that is not French is, in short, not a truffle.



Guy Monier: if it is not French, it cannot be considered a truffle

Guy Monier, the chairman of Maison de la Truffe, the French truffle supplier, lists five essential ways to tell the difference between a Chinese and French truffle — apart, that is, from measuring the damage to one's wallet.

- Chinese truffles are not as dark black on the outside, being more chocolate in colour
- Inside they are soft and rubbery
- The perfume is less strong
- The Perigord truffle is very dark inside, with irregular white veins, whereas the Chinese imposter has fine veins very close together

But the principal distinction, to M Monier, is also the simplest: "The Chinese truffle doesn't taste of anything."

"People who use Chinese truffles are principally large manufacturers who, say, mass-produce pâté and want to stick in little black bits that look like truffles," M Monier adds.

Lesser Chinese truffles may satisfy some taste buds, but only a genuine Perigord truffle is worth risking a life for — as was shown in 1992, when armed robbers raided a Carpentras truffle merchant and escaped with £35,000 worth of the black treasures. There is no record of anyone stealing a Chinese truffle.

For some the war in the Far East was over in August 1945. For others the battle still goes on.

This week marks the 57th anniversary of Pearl Harbour. The Japanese authorities have yet to make any meaningful restitution or apology for the terrible suffering endured by thousands of Allied servicemen and women, and civilians of all ages, who were imprisoned and interned between the attack on Pearl Harbour and the surrender in Tokyo Bay in August 1945.

With each day that passes the number of survivors becomes fewer. Before their lives fade into lonely and bitter memory, this is an appeal for people in Britain to show their deep feelings of dissatisfaction with the stance of the Japanese authorities and deliver a clear message. Send a Christmas card to the Japanese Ambassador, 101 Piccadilly, London W1V 9FN, as a peaceful signal of solidarity with this just cause.

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This advertisement has been paid for by anonymous supporters of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association, Oriel House, Church Green, Witney, Oxon. and the Association of British Civilian Internees, Far East Region, Northington Lodge, Northington, Hampshire.

White House scrambles to rescue Clinton

THE White House began a desperate attempt to avoid President Clinton becoming the second president to be impeached in American history by insisting yesterday that he was "genuinely sorry" for his actions and did not deserve such a fate.

The President's lawyer, Gregory Craig, told the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, there was a "powerful case" that Mr Clinton's behaviour in his affair with Monica Lewinsky, the former White House trainee, was wrong. But that did not warrant removal from office.

"The President wants everyone to know... that he is genuinely sorry for the pain and the damage he has caused and the wrongs he has committed," said Mr Craig. But he added: "As surely as we all know that what he did is sinful, we also know it is not impeachable. Nothing in this case justifies... overturning a national election and removing this President from office."

Amid calls from many quarters that Mr Clinton needed to show more contrition, Mr Craig was mounting a defence that the White House hopes will persuade wavering moderate Republicans to vote against impeachment — the

'Sorry' President in last-ditch plea, reports Damian Whitworth in Washington

equivalent of indictment — in a full vote of the House next week. If a majority votes to impeach Mr Clinton he will follow Andrew Johnson, the 19th century president, into the history books by facing a trial in the Senate for high crimes and misdemeanours.

In a senate trial a two-thirds majority would be needed to remove Mr Clinton from office, which even his harshest critics do not expect. But, aside from the indignity Mr Clinton would suffer, a trial would tie up Washington perhaps for months when the American people have said they want the matter dropped.

The Committee is drafting three articles of impeachment on perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power. Those articles will be debated when the two-day defence of Mr Clinton concludes today. Votes are expected on Friday and Satur-

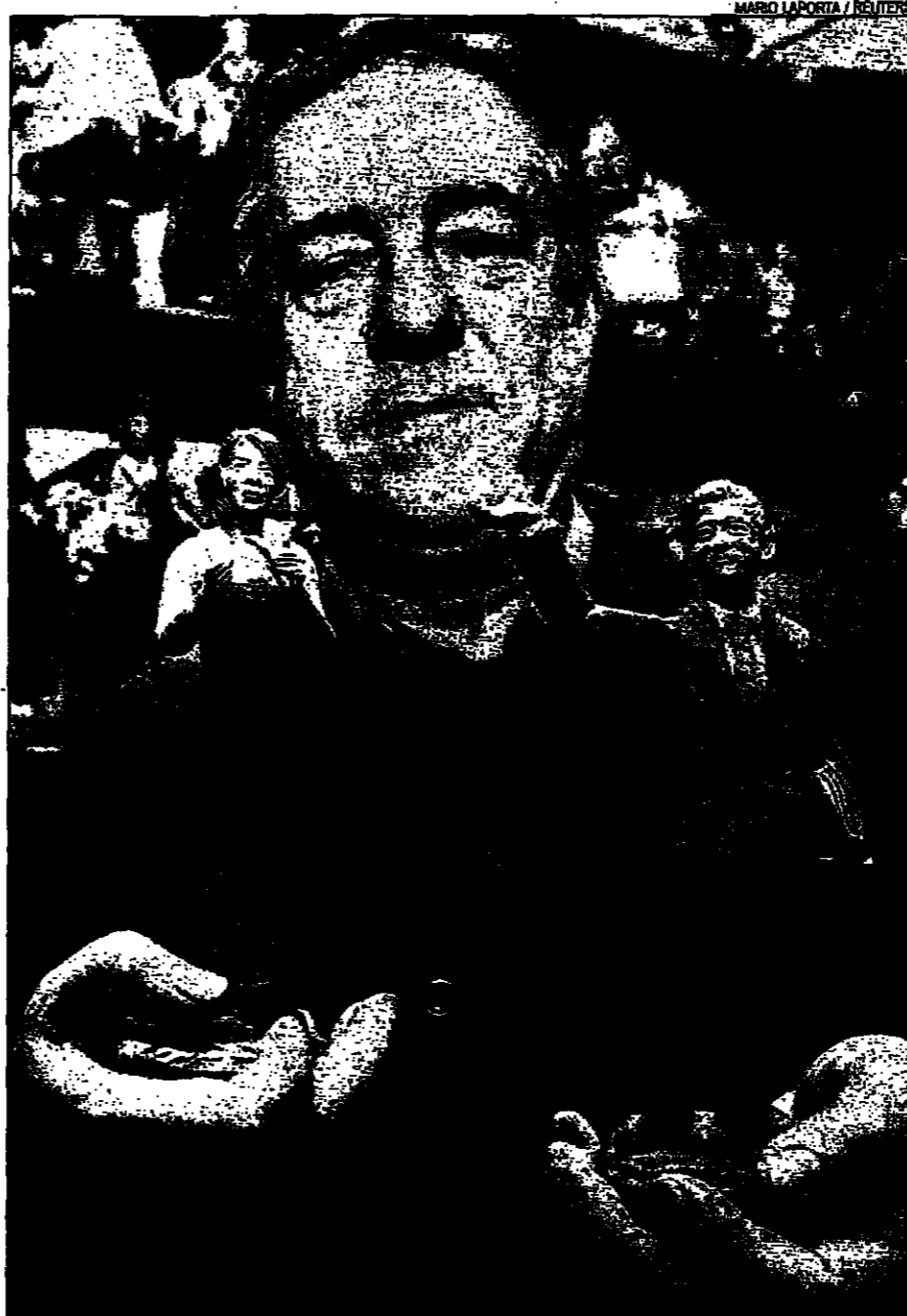
day. Mr Craig told the panel that the President's testimony in a January deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case, in which he denied having sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, was "evasive, incomplete, misleading, even maddening. But it was not perjury."

As for the President's testimony in August when Mr Clinton "admitted to an improper, inappropriate and intimate relationship with Ms Lewinsky", Mr Craig said: "Fair-minded Americans heard what the President said and knew what he meant."

Mr Craig denied allegations of obstruction of justice and abuse of office, saying the sworn testimony of Ms Lewinsky, Vernon Jordan, Mr Clinton's friend, and Betsy Currie, the President's secretary, exonerated him, and that all the assertions of executive privilege made by the White House "were perfectly proper".

Mr Craig said that the 14 witnesses being called by the White House would draw "a sharp distinction between immoral conduct and illegal action". Among them would be Nicholas Katzenbach, the former Attorney General.

Bronwen Maddox, page 20



Artisan Giuseppe Ferrigno holding his latest creations, Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. They will join the wise men and shepherds in the traditional crib

Bill and Monica join three wise men

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

THE crib-makers of Naples have raised ecclesiastical eyebrows by creating figures of President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky to place alongside the wise men and the shepherds, and also one of a naked Virgin Mary giving birth.

Giuseppe Ferrigno, whose family has been making crib figures in a workshop in the backstreets of Naples since 1836, said he saw nothing wrong with selling figures of Bill and Monica. "Last year I made figures of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, not long after their deaths," he said. "They sold very well."

Signor Ferrigno works in the quarter of San Gregorio di Armeno with his son Marco. The two craftsmen also make figures of leading politicians to place in the crib, including Massimo D'Alema, the moustached former communist who became Prime Minister in October. "I like to include personalities who have been prominent during the past year. No one can deny that is true of Clinton and Monica Lewinsky."

"I don't see this as blasphemous," he said. "It's a bit of fun, part of the festive spirit."

He said he drew the line, however, at the latest innovation in the Naples crib business: a naked and visibly pregnant Virgin Mary, lying on her back with the head of the infant Jesus appearing between her legs.



Duvalier: French say they have lost him

Baby Doc may face trial in France

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE anonymous life in exile of Jean-Claude Duvalier, the former dictator of Haiti who fled to France 12 years ago, may soon be at an end after the formation of a committee to seek his trial for crimes against humanity.

Inspired by the extradition cases against General Augusto Pinochet, the former Chilean dictator, an association of Haitian exiles and French academics says that M Duvalier is still under French protection. "It is our duty to make sure that Jean-Claude Duvalier is tried for the memory of the 60,000 victims of his regime and that of his father, François," Gerald Blomcourt, a Haitian journalist and the founder of the Committee to Bring Duvalier to Judgment, said.

The French Interior Ministry says that although M Duvalier was for many years a resident of the Côte d'Azur, it has since lost track of him. M Duvalier's lawyer said yesterday that his client was still living in the country and has not been served with an international arrest or extradition warrant.

In exile, the former dictator spent much of the money he had looted from Haiti living the life of a Riviera playboy and then lost almost all the rest in the course of a divorce. He moved to Paris in 1993 and is believed to be ill and virtually penniless. Geneva: A Swiss judge has issued an international arrest warrant for Jorge Rafael Videla, the former Argentine President, in connection with the 1977 disappearance of a Swiss-Chilean student in Buenos Aires. The case of Alexis Jaccard has already led to Switzerland requesting the extradition from Britain of General Pinochet. (A/P)

Spiderman's web of crime broken

FROM REUTERS IN MIAMI

POLICE claimed yesterday to have ended the criminal career of a burglar dubbed "Spiderman", famed for his ability to scale tall buildings.

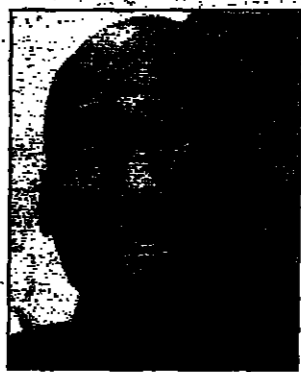
Derrick James, a former US Army paratrooper, of Oakland Park, Florida, was convicted of burglary and grand theft at a high-rise flat in Miami in June. Prosecutors said they would seek a 30-year jail sentence even though James was charged with only one crime. The thefts of cash and valuables worth \$6 million (£3.6 million) were blamed on Spiderman.

In June, a special task force of state and local police agencies said it had cracked the mystery of Spiderman, an acrobatic thief believed to have been responsible for 100 high-rise burglaries in six Florida counties since 1994.

The burglar stunned police with his daring and physical prowess, scaling the outside of luxury apartment towers and

moving from balcony to balcony without the use of climbing equipment. His most remarkable feat was a burglary on a building's thirtieth floor.

Ellis Rubin, James's attorney, said that he would appeal for a mistrial because a prosecution witness had used the word "Spiderman" in front of the jurors.




James: police believe he is behind 100 robberies

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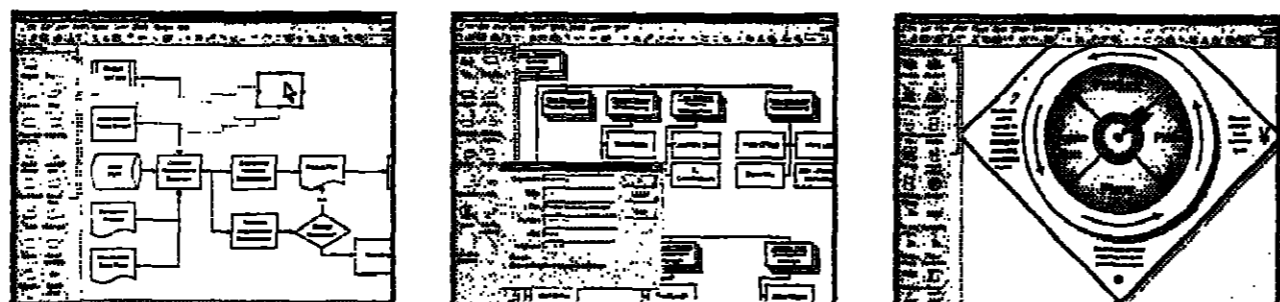
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Water holds the key to secrets of the Red Planet

The latest probe may provide evidence that there was once life on our neighbouring planet, says Nicholas Booth

If all goes to plan, tomorrow evening Nasa will launch its latest mission to the Red Planet. Project scientists hope that it will unravel the mysteries of the climate of Mars and reveal clues about why our interplanetary neighbour is a freezing, inhospitable world.

The mission, which boasts significant British input, will also zero in on another question that has haunted us for centuries: have conditions ever been right for life to have existed on Mars?

For Professor Fred Taylor, an atmospheric physicist at Oxford University, the launch of the Mars Climate Orbiter cannot come soon enough. "We've had to wait far too long to get our instrument to Mars," he says. "For the first time, we will really understand how the Martian atmosphere actually works."

Evidence suggests an ancient, extensive sea

Nasa lost contact with the craft just hours before it arrived in orbit there in 1993. So, from spare parts, Oxford researchers and engineers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California built an exact copy.

After that setback, Professor Taylor's group had to wait for the right interplanetary bus to come along. Now, thanks to speculation that life may once have existed on the Red Planet, Mars is fashionable again. Nasa is dispatching pairs of spacecraft to Mars every two years, usually an orbiting mission and a separate landing craft.

The pressurised modulated radiometer was unceremoniously left off the last mission, which arrived in orbit around Mars last year. "We had to wait because our instrument is quite heavy," Professor Taylor says. "But the payoff is that we get the orbit we want and we only have one other instrument, a camera, sharing power supply."

After lift-off tomorrow, the Mars Climate Orbiter will take a year to reach the planet. Meteorologists hope that the mission will tell us something about the climate of our own planet. Earth's climate is difficult to model because of the huge influence of the oceans, which remains largely unknown. In Mars, however, nature has provided a world without oceans whose atmospheric motions are broadly similar to those on Earth. This simpler, smaller planet is therefore an ideal test-bed for current theories.

Earlier space missions have shown that Mars is freezing and arid: the surface pressure is roughly a hundredth of that on Earth, temperatures on average -60C, making it impossible for liquid water to exist on Mars today. Yet the planet does possess remarkable weather features, including fogs, frosts and clouds. "We don't really know how they affect the atmosphere overall," Professor Taylor says. "Our instrument will give us daily profiles of the state of the atmosphere. From that, we will work out how the climate on Mars has evolved."

Water is seen as the key to both this riddle and the far greater one about the possibility of life on Mars. Without water, life cannot exist and its distribution on the planet today is crucial to the debate.

By systematically determining how water vapour varies around the planet throughout a Martian year (about two Earth years), Professor Taylor hopes to be able to find clues about hidden water reserves on Mars such as deep subsurface ice fields.

The surface of Mars is peppered with evidence suggesting dramatic water erosion over geological time: deeply cut canyons, what look like ravines and outflows, as well as evidence of an extensive, yet shallow sea in the ancient past. "There are theories as to how big this ocean could have been," Professor Taylor says, "but we are limited by lack of data. The Martian climate may have been stable and warm enough to have sustained it."

To date, space missions have given



Ocean of knowledge: learning about water on Mars will help scientists to gain deeper insights into the Earth's weather patterns

en tantalising clues as to what the ancient history of Mars may have been like. Because it is smaller than the Earth, it cannot "hold on to" as dense an atmosphere and, over the millennia, much of it may have seeped away into space. At the moment, though, a lot of the evidence for the evolution of water on Mars is circumstantial or contradictory.

On Friday, *Science* publishes the first three-dimensional map of the north polar cap of Mars. Like Earth, Mars has polar icecaps that wax and wane with the seasons. Us-

ing laser pulses to build a picture of the north polar cap, an instrument aboard the Mars Global Surveyor has shown that "the amount of water is roughly ten times less than that needed to fill the proposed ancient ocean on Mars", says Dr Maria Zuber, a Nasa researcher.

"Our results indicate that either the proposed ocean didn't exist or was much smaller than currently thought," she says. The laser also has mapped large chunks of ice, "much too large to be seasonal phenomena", Dr Zuber continues.

"These observations represent evidence that the icecap was once bigger than it is now."

So where did all the Martian water go? That is what the latest mission hopes to find out. The Oxford instrument will get a look at the "water cycle" on Mars, seeing which regions of the surface are likely to harbour fogs and frosts. "We also know that there is exchange between the atmosphere and the poles," Professor Taylor says.

Some scientists believe that most of the original water on Mars is

still present but hidden from view, perhaps locked up as ice beneath the surface. Although no evidence for microbes was found when Nasa's two Viking landers sifted Martian soils for biological activity in the 1970s, provocative clues about life were revealed two years ago from analysis of an ancient meteorite found in Antarctica. While the conclusion that Mars may have harboured primordial life forms is still controversial, the discovery of ice deposits could increase the chance of it being found now.

Gimps — a prime use of computer time

The best measure of how cheap something has become is how unthinkingly it is squandered. One perfect example is computation. Once, every microsecond of a computer's time was measured out and paid for: today fast chips inside desktop PCs do little more of the time but create pretty screensavers. Even when in active use, which generally means nothing more demanding than word-processing, only a fraction of their total power is used.

Aaron Blosser, a computer consultant from Lakewood, Colorado, is in trouble for trying to make the computers at the telephone company US

West work a bit harder for their living. He linked up the company's 2,585 PCs to an Internet-based hunt for prime numbers, known as the Great Internet Mersenne Prime Search, or Gimps. Alas, he made a slip in writing his software, and computers designed to retrieve telephone numbers starting searching for a different kind of number altogether.

His error was rumbled when the computers all logged on to the Net at once, ignoring their proper duties and taking five minutes to retrieve telephone numbers that should have come up in a couple of seconds.

Had Blosser not made his

mistake, US West would never have noticed.

The Gimps software never steals time from other uses, insists Scott Kurowski of San José, California, who wrote it. A few hundred other businesses support the project, allowing their computers to log on to the Gimps server for a few seconds every ten days or so, and do the calculations when it is idle. More than 6,000 PCs are linked up, and have so far



SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

Gimps software. Mersenne primes are named for the French monk

found three new prime numbers of huge size. The most recent — the 37th known Mersenne prime — was found earlier this year.

It is two to the power of 3021377, minus one. When written out, it consists of 909,526 digits, and it was found by a student, Roland Clarkson of California State University, using

Marin Mersenne, who in 1644 proposed that the formula two to the power of *n* minus one produced primes for a range of numbers up to 257.

Some of those he claimed were wrong, but his name was still attached to this type of prime number. A test for which values of *n* really produce primes was produced in 1930, and forms the basis of the Gimps software.

The process of calculation is crushing, which is why all Mersenne primes of any size were produced by supercomputers until Gimps came along.

Clarkson's prime took 46 days running part-time on his slightly out-of-date computer;

its primacy was confirmed on a Swiss supercomputer. Now Kurowski has put up a prize for the next prime — \$1 per thousand digits.

"We are all into kind of geeky interests," he admits. "Loving numbers is a hard thing to do unless you grow up with it."

Chris Caldwell, of the University of Tennessee, keeps a Web list of all the primes ever discovered. He says: "Most computer power is wasted on screen savers. It really pleases me to see part of that reclaimed on doing something practical."

Aaron Blosser, happily, has not yet been charged with any crime.

Mars, Stars and Stripes

A CAMERA developed by the American space agency Nasa to explore Mars is being used by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to help to preserve the star-spangled banner that flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.

Measuring 30ft by 34ft, the flag's survival during a bombardment by British forces on the night of September 13, 1814, inspired the lawyer Francis Scott Key to write the words of America's national anthem. "By dawn's early light" the following morning he wrote down the verses,

which were later set to an English tune.

Donated to the Smithsonian in 1912, the flag is both precious and fragile. Nasa's Acousto-Optic Imaging Spectrometer is being used to take 72 separate images of the flag, which will be put together to form a mosaic from which those working to preserve it can more easily identify deteriorated and soiled areas. The camera was built at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Centre, which has lent it to the Smithsonian for the project.

The flag was made of wool bunting and cotton stars by Mary Pickersgill of Baltimore and her 13-year-old daughter, Caroline. However much it cost them at the time, they would doubtless be astonished to know that preserving it 186 years later could take three years, and cost \$10 million.

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Myopia, a challenge for the far-sighted

MYOPIA is still seen as an inevitable part of man's lot. In Europe and America 30 per cent of people are short-sighted. In Japan and Hong Kong the figure is 70 per cent. And the rates are rising. Yet nobody does anything about it except prescribe spectacles.

In his lecture, reported in *Australasian Science*, Professor Neville McBrien of the University of Melbourne calls for greater effort to understand the basic cause of short-sightedness, the excessive lengthening of the eyeball. "We do not understand why this occurs, nor have we any effective treatment," he said.

Inherited factors are important: Chinese children in Singapore are more myopic than Malays. But so is environment: people of similar genetic background are more likely to be myopic if they live in Hong Kong rather than rural south China.

There is an occupational connection, too. People who do "near work" such as writing and sewing are more likely to be affected. But is this cause or effect? Nobody knows. Drugs such as atropine can stop the eye elongating, but can cause damage, Professor McBrien said. Exercises and fancy lenses do not work. Here is a challenge that only the truly short-sighted would ignore.

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'Tis the season for extortion

Thursday: From behind his desk in the foyer, Igor, the afternoon doorman, spots me as I return from the local 24-hour supermarket, Gristedes. To my surprise, he strides out to the pavement and intercepts me. "Here, I'll take those," he commands, setting my bag and steering me towards the lift.

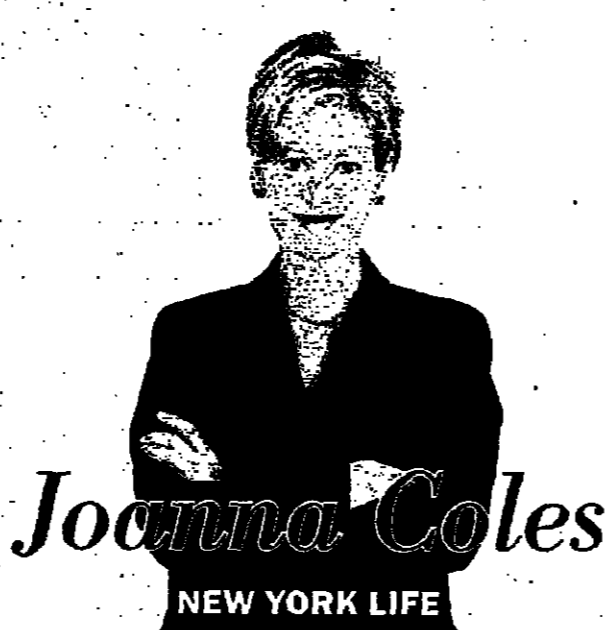
In fact, the bag is not heavy at all. The heavy stuff will be delivered directly to my door within the hour. The bag whisked by Igor contains only emergency supplies of Hershey's hot chocolate and digestive biscuits, the objects of my current cravings. But Igor, a laconic soul who normally restricts himself to mournful observations about the post-Communist chaos in his Russian homeland, seems to have experienced an unexpected character change.

"No need to check the mail, your boyfriend has taken it up already," he adds, insisting on accompanying me to the elevator at the back of the lobby. Instead of depositing the bags and returning to the ringing phone on his desk, he

waits genially until the lift has arrived before placing the bag carefully at my feet and pressing the seventh-floor button. "Have a good one!" he calls as the door slides shut jerkily.

Friday morning: As I navigate the gloom of the lobby, Ishmael, the morning doorman who has worked in the building for 25 years and also tends towards the terse, salutes me with an unusually hearty greeting. "Need a cab, Miss Coles?" he solicits.

He hustles out into the morning traffic, a stout figure in his grey uniform fringed with red braid, blowing his whistle in short violent screeches until a yellow cab pulls up. "Goodbye, Miss Coles," waves Ishmael, shutting the door after me. "Have a good day!"



Joanna Coles
NEW YORK LIFE

Friday afternoon: When I get home, Peter reports a similar mutation — this time in Lugo, the singing handyman. Normally the lead time on leisurely Lugo's Complaints Log is ten days, but today he has popped up twice to our apartment cheerfully to batter our wheezing prewar radiators with his monkey wrench. He assures Peter that this will dissuade them from their annoying habit of clanking wildly at 4am.

"It's very strange," says Peter of Lugo's new-found enthusiasm. "I only complained this morning." We wonder briefly if the building is under new management.

Later, leaving the lift with another tenant I again encounter Igor's fervent ministrations. "Hello ladies," he breezes as we emerge. "It's 69 degrees in Central Park and they say tomorrow will be in the seventies, a record for December!"

"It's like there has been some corporate personality change," I mutter as we leave the building. My fellow tenant, a sprightly octogenarian sparrow, rubs her thumb and forefinger together, knowingly. "Don't worry, it won't last," she says. "They're always nice in December, it's tip time."

Saturday: "How much do you think we should give them?" I ask Peter, handing him the "Happy Holidays!" card which was pushed under the door last night. "From all the staff of your building," it says, and bears 12 printed names accompanied by their autographs.

"I dunno. About \$25 each?" he suggests.

"I think it's supposed to be a bit higher than that," I say, cautiously.

"Well, if every flat in the building gives them that

much, then each doorman will pull in two-and-a-half grand. That's not bad for a Christmas box, is it?"

"And I suppose it mounts up," I add. "It's going to cost us about \$300, with maybe another \$40 for the super."

Peter examines the card again. "I mean, I don't even know half these people. Who is Dimitri?"

I slip across to our neighbour to seek her advice on Manhattan tipping etiquette. "I usually give \$60 per doorman and \$150 to the super," she says. "Then probably \$50 each to the two guys who handle the garbage, and \$80 to Lugo. That way, if you have a problem during the year, he'll leapfrog you to the front of the line."

I tot it all up. "Eight hundred and ten dollars — it's more expensive than I'd imagined," I say quietly, deciding to compare notes with friends

just in case she's exaggerating.

"Minimum \$80 to each doorman," instructs Nadia.

"And we give our super \$200. You just never know if you're going to need him. And don't forget to give your cleaner an extra week's pay at Christmas, plus a personal gift."

"Then you should leave the newspaper delivery boy \$20, the supermarket delivery boy \$20, your hairdresser twice her usual fee, plus a gift."

"I usually give mine some Crabtree & Evelyn bath accessories because she's into British stuff. Oh, and a gift to the girl who washes your hair. Um, I think that's all."

"But that's way over \$1,000," I complain.

"Yes, but if you don't do it, they will punish you for the rest of the year," she warns me.

"Doormen keep a note of who gives what and you'll be asked to suffer."

Sunday: "God, I'm sick of this," rages Peter as he staggers in with the swollen pre-Christmas papers. "Ads, ads, ads. And they all begin the same: 'The Joy of Giving...'"

"Which reminds me," I say to the front page of *The New York Times* behind which he has retreated. "It looks like we will have to spend about \$1,200 on tipping everyone for Christmas."

"How much?"

"We'll be targeted if we don't. They can make our lives miserable."

"It's like extortion," he mutters, but I can tell the fight has drained out of him.

"By the way," he adds, cheering up briefly. "I think I've found a morally respectable excuse for your failure to score Furbies for your godson."

"The *New York Post* claims they are made in southern China by workers who earn \$20 a week."

Don't tip doormen and you will be punished all year

A cause with no blame

Why is no one accountable for animal rights violence, asks Vanora Bennett

In the freezing dark, five women and three men are huddled around a makeshift brazier, a fire burning in a dustbin. Although few of them have met Barry Horne, the 46-year-old animal rights activist starving himself to death a few hundred yards away in York District Hospital, they are here to keep vigil, a picket to mark his almost inevitable passing.

The night is bone-chilling, yet no one moves to take a space for me. But then I am not an animal; even their five dogs have the benefit of some muddy blankets.

Horne's hunger strike, now in its 64th day, has been dismissed by officials as blackmail. If, as seems certain, he becomes the first martyr to the cause, one extremist group has threatened to assassinate ten supporters of vivisection.

Members of the sullen group huddled outside the hospital grounds deny any involvement in this. They are law-abiding, they insist, people who love animals and want cruelty against them to stop. And here lies the conundrum at the heart of the animal rights campaign. It is impossible to find anybody who admits to being violent, yet violence here undoubtedly is. And even a nation of animal lovers finds it hard to feel sympathy for people prepared to dispense with human life. So what makes some animal lovers cross that line? Who are the people for whom animal life is sacrosanct but human life expendable?

Like the disaffected underclass of American society — the Unabomber, the Montana Freeman, or the Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh — the extreme fringe of Britain's animal rights activists feel alienated from an Establishment that they believe is riding roughshod over them.

On the Animal Liberation Front's (ALF) website, the British Government is compared to Nazi Germany. "If we are repressing, so were the soldiers who broke down the gates of Hitler's death camps,"

reads the slogan. "And if we are vandals, so were those who destroyed the gas chambers of Buchenwald and Auschwitz."

But there is more than estrangement at work here. There is a sense of embattled togetherness for people who may have been lonely and unfulfilled until they found a category of life to protect. There is even a dark strain of conspiratorial fun. The website, put together in America, lists "prisoners of war" and encourages users to adopt pseudonyms to foil government watchers. Activists warn callers that "they" are probably listening in.

The campaign at York shows the quasi-religious side of the attraction. Leaflets and posters, placed along a wall, give it an air of an improvised shrine, full of both idealism and irrationality.

"Has a man got to die for a Labour lie?" screams the biggest, angriest banner. But the 20-year-old unemployed Mancunian sitting underneath will not admit to anger, only selflessness and victimisation. His eyes are downcast. His voice is a whisper. He has no name he is willing to give. He came to York on Saturday, one of the pickets who man the vigil for a few hours each day. He wasn't around, he says, when weekend activists climbed on to the roof of the radiology department.

His story is straightforward enough. Irritated by his "savagely carnivorous" family, he became a vegetarian at 12 and then a vegan when he left school, and became involved full-time in hunt sabotage and animal rights protests. Becoming vegan, he says, shaped his life. It made him sick to be around people eating meat, and he lost his non-vegan friends. Beyond that, he is vague about his motivation. "It just came together for me," he says. "I don't have time for a social life. I spend all my time working to save the animals."

Horne's spokeswoman and next of kin, 29-year-old Alison Lawson, paints his demand in modest colours — all Horne wants is for a royal commission to be set



Hunger strike: Barry Horne



Vigil: Animal rights campaigners have kept up a round-the-clock protest outside York District Hospital, where Barry Horne has now gone 64 days without food

up, as Labour promised. "He doesn't want to die," says Lawson. "But he says only Labour can save him by keeping its promise." Another activist adds: "If Barry dies, it will be both a heroic death and a terrible tragedy. I wouldn't say he'll be a martyr, more a victim."

Whether Horne is a victim is a moot point. He is serving an 18-year jail sentence for an animal rights firebombing campaign that caused £3 million in damage. Horne is part of an "army" of animal rights protesters who have declared war on what they call "species-ism". In practice, this means war against people connected in some way with trade in animals: fur traders, vivisectionists, science laboratories and individual scientists.

The most visible group is the ALF, which has carried out thousands of "actions". But animal rights terror groups have no faces, only the mysterious statements and secretive attacks that give them notoriety. Public spokesmen for the 3,000-odd legal animal rights groups in Britain — a loose series of ever-changing and shifting sympathies, always on the move and passing on word of actions by newsletters, e-mail and mobile phones — claim no responsibility for the terror groups. They will only say darkly that

there is no telling what form other people's natural anger at injustice will take.

"They [the vivisection companies] know there will be anger and they are concerned for their premises and welfare should Barry die," says John Pounder, a spokesman for the Animals Betrayed Coalition umbrella group. "We operate above board, but we can't dictate to every individual how they are to react to Barry's death. If people could see the pictures of vivisection, if they knew that horror, I'm sure there would be more anguish and anger. I can understand people being angry if a man has died for helping animals."

The latest terror group to emerge is the Animal Rights Militia, or ARM, the group which wants to carry out the revenge killings on ten people if Horne dies. It has named four of its intended victims, who are living under police protection. Police will not comment on security for possible targets or profile the kind of activist they think will turn violent. Nor will institutions that have been targeted before. The Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, where Dolly the sheep was cloned in 1996, refuses to discuss activist suggestions that it has installed surveillance cameras, trip wires and razor wire.

Colin Blakemore, the Professor of Physiology at Oxford University and one of the

four intended victims, describes his existence as "one step below Salman Rushdie". This is nothing new for him, after 12 years as a target. His children once opened a bomb, sent by animal activists, containing "half a pound of high explosive and needles". Blakemore denounces "terrorism and coercion" as ways for the animal rights activists to advance their cause.

He says the activists are closing avenues of negotiation. He believes that the ARM's victims were picked from recent television debates, sending "a clear message — if you speak on this, you get assassinated. That gives an indication of these people's willingness for real rational debate."

Barry Horne's hunger strike, says Blakemore, has done little to achieve his stated aim of getting a royal commission set up to look into vivisection. Horne's campaign is anyway muddled and pointless, the scientist believes, as forums already exist for discussing vivisection. But he is also critical of Labour for making extravagant election promises and small, high-profile concessions that have not changed the thrust of policy. "They have sent out a message to animal extremists that if they push hard enough maybe they will abolish animal use altogether."

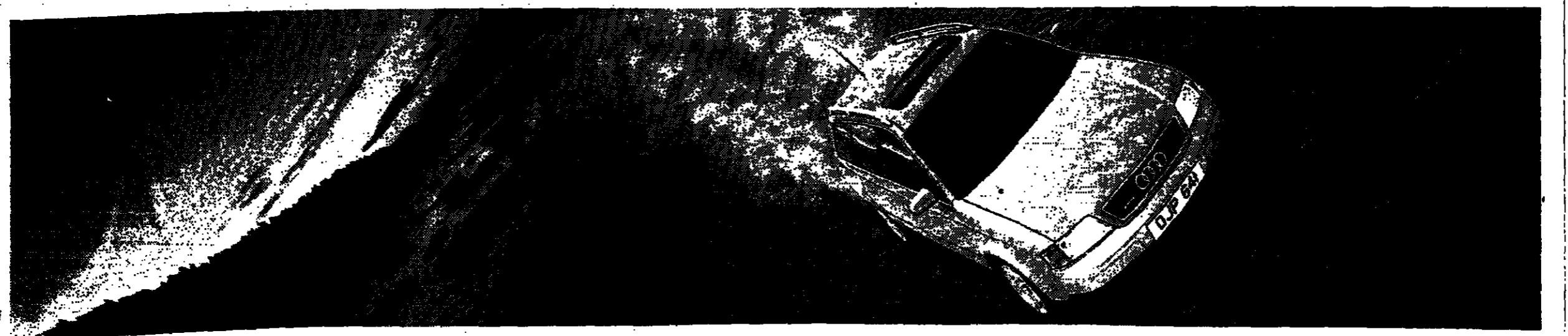
The worry now is that there will be an outpouring of violence if and when Horne dies. Whether others are willing to take that step... I would guess there probably are others. But I hope they will see that it would be counter-productive.

It seems a forlorn hope. The Mancunian with no name tells me that recently he has demonstrated against fur sales in Manchester, and travelled to Oxfordshire to campaign for the closure of the Hillgrove Farm cattery, which provides animals for research.

Although the cattery owner, Christopher Brown, is on the ARM death list, the man with no name shakes his head at the notion that he could have been involved in any of the past attacks on Hillgrove. It is the other way round, he says: the only violence he has encountered is while hunting, when huntsmen threw a brick through the window of the car he was in.

Nor does he believe in the threat of the Animal Rights Militia. "I wonder whether it is true," he says. "It would be so convenient for the other side if they could point to threats of violence from us."

What he and his campaign friends plan to do if Horne dies is also a mystery. "I don't think anyone's worked out what to do next," he says, bewildered. "We have not got that far yet."



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Spare him the Starr treatment

The case against Clinton is still weak, argues Bronwen Maddox

Suddenly, we're back to impeachment. To national disbelief, to the astonishment of even Washington insiders, the hearings into whether President Clinton should be impeached over his affair with Monica Lewinsky have taken on new gravity in the past week.

We have, once again, the quasi-judicial presence of Henry Hyde dominating the nation's news. With his huge, square head on his huge, square body, the shoulders of his black suit jutting out horizontally, parallel to the parapet of his black leather throne, he is perfectly shaped to fit the proportions of the television screen.

Then we have a weary-looking President, doggedly sticking to business, but with his focus and poise almost visibly slipping away. As the Clintons stepped on to Air Force One yesterday, heading for the Tennessee funeral of the father of Al Gore, the Vice-President, they turned at the cabin door for the standard wave to the cameras. But their two aides were following close behind and bumped into the First Couple, forcing the four briefly to glue together in an awkward quadrille, the Clintons' fluttering hands poking out from the Not drowning, but not really waving, either.

The dogs barked at the mid-term election, but the congressional caravan hasn't moved an inch. And neither have the arguments. The case for impeaching the President remains, as it always has been, weak.

Ironically, the new impetus in the impeachment hearings has sprung from another weakness — the vacuum in politics, caused by the public's lack of strong feelings about the President's future, and the lack of leadership in the Republican Party.

The Republican leadership may be floundering, but the congressional members who are still pushing for impeachment are driven by political calculations. They discern that the President is weaker than a month ago following the Democratic triumph of the mid-term elections. While two thirds of Americans continue to tell pollsters that they do not want Mr Clinton ousted prematurely, it is still far from clear that they would rally passionately to his defence.

The political risks for Republicans of venturing at least part of the way down the impeachment trail suddenly look lower. They have not vanished, but with no forceful House leadership to replace Newt Gingrich, the Speaker, there is no one to urge caution and a rapid end to the hearings, nor anyone to rein in the noisy cheerleaders for impeachment, captained by Tom DeLay, the Republican Whip.

It is likely that the House Judiciary Committee will recommend bringing at least one charge of impeachment against the President, perhaps as soon as today. Their best bet is perjury — that he lied under

oath in the Paula Jones case about having an affair with Ms Lewinsky.

Mr Clinton's defence has its weaknesses. Yesterday it ran into the familiar, murky waters of the exact definition of sex. His lawyers, well aware by now that the public has loathed Mr Clinton's evasive wordplay, earnestly relayed the President's concern that "no technicalities or legalities should be allowed to obscure the simple moral truth that his behaviour was wrong". They then repeated the claim that his earlier, sworn denial of the affair with Ms Lewinsky was "misleading, even maddening, but it was not perjury".

But even if that tactic itself seems maddening, we can have some sympathy for them, and for the President. As Kenneth Starr, the special prosecutor, has said, Mr Clinton may face criminal charges when he leaves the Oval Office in 2000, and an admission of perjury would instantly deepen that jeopardy.

The Clinton team brandished another now-familiar argument: that the charges against Mr Clinton are less

grave than those against Richard Nixon or Andrew Johnson, the only precedents in American history, because they stem from his personal life, not his performance in the job. That claim is highly debatable. Many Americans, while sympathising instinctively, find it clashes with their belief that no person should be above the law, even if President.

This profound conflict of principle has, rightly, run throughout the debate on the Lewinsky case. The law is not clear on this point, nor is popular opinion, but at least Congress has had a chance to tackle head-on the definition of an impeachable offence.

Whatever side you take on that point, however, it is still possible to feel deeply uneasy about the impeachment proceedings. The most powerful part of the President's defence, made yesterday by ranks of the nation's top constitutional experts and law professors, is that for all the judicial appearance of the House Judiciary Committee, the standard of evidence falls far below that of a courtroom.

The point was put forcefully by John Conyers, the senior Democrat on the committee. The Starr report, the foundation of the committee's deliberations, was based on uncorroborated, contradictory, hearsay, delivered to the grand jury without cross-examination. It "cannot possibly serve as evidentiary foundation of an impeachment", he argued. Mr Conyers is right, as anyone who leafed through the chaotic, tumbling pages of Mr Starr's life work will surely agree. You do not have to claim that the President is above the law to find that document, however memorable a place it grabs in American history, to be an inadequate basis for impeachment.

Starr's best bet against Clinton is a charge of perjury



"IT'S THE IDEAL SOLUTION — KEEP ONE & SEND THE OTHER HOME!"

One me is not enough

Yes, doctor, I should like to live for ever. I am enjoying my voyage on the good ship Earth and should like to stay on board, other things being equal. Those things, of course, include a sound heart and mind, eyes to see, legs to walk and a better backhand volley. And while you are about it, I might like another SJ every thirty years or so, to keep me up to the mark.

In his *Embarrassment of Riches*, Simon Schama concluded that 17th-century Holland lived better than any community until the 20th century. Everyone had enough food and shelter. Even modest homes could afford fine carpets and pictures. A welfare state was fully developed. Women were emancipated, families were small and children spoiled. Only one medieval horror opened a chasm between that 17th century and ours: that of agony unto death. Medical science could not shield even the rich from pain.

Yesterday's debate on the future of cloning will one day seem as primitive as did Dutch debates over the causes of plague. I regard medicine as still emerging from that darkness. It can stifle pain, tackle epidemics and keep a few organs ticking. But give medical science a serious challenge, such as cancer, arthritis or degenerative brain disorder, and it is flummoxed. Scientists have been given money beyond the dreams of Croesus. They are immune from criticism, accountability or performance monitoring. Yet they seem like doctors flustering round the bed of George III, wondering whether blisters are preferable to leeches.

From all I have read, human genetics offers far and away the most exciting area of medical research. The cloning of cells holds the key to curing inherited illness and to stalling the partial decay of the body. Such advances will not keep me going for ever, but they can at least save parts of me from falling off before the rest is ready to die. Physicists can go to Mars and explore cyberspace. Biologists can transform foods and forests. Geneticists are in a class of their own. They offer a new therapeutics and a glimpse of immortality.

Cloning is mechanically simple, the test-tube enactment of a pseudo-conception. Its potential stretches from growing compatible skin tissues and organ parts, to the full replication of embryos. Its applications are legion.

Old Wives' Tales and new Labour should not stand in the way of science

Theoretically, we could store brain cells in a bank for rekindling later in life, or recreate a loved one lost in an accident. There seems to be nothing that cannot usefully and profitably replace the nucleus in a female egg. In Britain, the result so far has been sheep, and in Japan, cows. In America a publicity-seeking clinic is said to be eager to produce babies from one rather than two parents. This scientific juggernaut is accelerating. Britain's response is to produce a joint report of the Human Genetics Advisory Commission (HGAC) and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). This waves a red flag in one hand and a green in the other. Such reports tend to be run over by juggernauts.

The public's attitude to science staggers along the narrow border between wonder and horror, shoving this way and that by bouts of publicity. Announce that gene research can relieve infertility and inherited illness, and Nobel prizes will fall like rain. Announce that gene research seeks a master race of Stepford Wives and Midwich Cuckoos, and capital punishment is too good for the researchers. The white-coated doctor with a halo is only a short step from the door of Dr Frankenstein's laboratory. Both doctors meant well. But give either a test tube and a spark of electricity and they will end up playing God — unless the Government plays it first. So believes the public.

The writers of the HGAC/HFEA report may lack the style of a Mary Shelley, but they know what stands the public's hair on end. They are near fanatical in their bans. Top of their list is anything that has to do with human reproduction. They will not tolerate "replacing the nucleus of a cell of an embryo with the nucleus taken from the cell of another person". The keeping of any embryo after "the appearance of the primitive streak or 14 days, whichever is later" is absolutely banned. The use of eggs from aborted foetuses or corpses is forbidden.

Simon Jenkins

HGAC/HFEA. Small wonder Frankenstein gets the best press.

No scientist is seriously proposing to clone a human being, though I still cannot see the moral case against such an innovation. The in-vitro fertilisation of twins, who are clones, is morally acceptable. Why not an in-vitro twin of a twin? Clones are not facsimiles, whatever science fiction may imply. Some may find this distasteful — known in this business as the yuk factor — but that is a quite separate matter.

Britain is now the world capital of the ban. Whatever a minister, committee, newspaper or lobbyist finds distasteful is grist to the banishing mill. If in doubt, ban it. There are no bans on genetic research in America or Japan where there is clearly a more vigorous tradition of scientific freedom. Demands by his colleagues for a wider genetic moratorium, are unrealistic. Genetic engineering will soon leave electronics far behind as the world's most dynamic industry. To think that a British committee can control this is absurd.

The world is embarking on what the American scientist, Edward O. Wilson, calls the age of "volitional evolution". Genetic engineering offers the means of short-circuiting Darwinian selection. It hopes to be able to eliminate certain inherited illnesses, including haemophilia, cystic fibrosis and sickle-cell anaemia. The means may, to some people, seem "as unnatural as once did vaccination or anaesthetics. Such means should not be subject to a Christian Science veto. I prefer to defer to the suffices.

In his recent book, *Consilience*, Wilson compares the anti-genetic lobby to those who howled down Charles Darwin. "Why," he asks, "should a species give up the defining core of its existence: millions of years of biological trial and error?" — and all from a fear of the unknown. Genetic science is the next stage in the evolutionary chain, best regulated by research, publicity and debate, not scientific censorship. In 1831, Darwin boarded the *Beagle* for South America, with the blessing of Her Majesty's Admiralty. Today he would be left behind on the quay, filling in forms banning the touching of turtles, the measuring of toucans and the thinking of thoughts "unacceptable" to Whitehall.

Alan Coren



We Three Kings bearing acute shoppers' stress

I stand, today, in great debt to Dr David Lewis. What about it, you cry, every man in the country stands in great debt to him, he is the brilliant psychologist who last week declared that all men risk instant heart attacks if they try to do any Christmas shopping — just walking past Selfridge's window induces male stress levels normally recorded only when a Tornado pilot spots a copper finds himself staring down the sawn-off end of something unpredictable. So then, since Dr Lewis has told all the nation's wives that if they don't want to become all the nation's widows they must tuck up all the nation's husbands in front of a roaring fire with a magnum of claret and a pile of ham sandwiches, no crusts, while they themselves rush about accumulating the yuletide gubbins, what makes my debt so special?

What makes it so special is that Dr Lewis has done not only all this for all men, but also, for me, solved a 2,000-year-old riddle. The solution is contained in his report, a study of the stress levels and mood when men actually steel themselves to do Christmas shopping, they do it, in order to reduce their agitation, at the last minute. Defying the first thing they see. Which, at last, sheds all the light we scholars have hitherto sought on the mysterious case of the Three Kings of Orient and the bizarre gifts they carried with them to Bethlehem.

I realise, of course, that for non-scholars among you the location of Orient is itself a mystery which has annually nagged at you down the long corridors years, but we dabblers in antiquarianism are now firmly convinced that Orient is a rhyme-enforced abbreviation of Orient'RUUS, a super-market chain specialising in everything from brass going south to spices, pickles and hoodlums, and very probably — such has been the rigorous nature of our scholarship — cognate with the Aladdin's cave featured in the Christmas pantu, which, you'll recall, if it supplies a gift you don't like, for example a lamp, will be happy to exchange it.

Just this sort of portmanteau establishment to appeal to frantic last-minute male shoppers stuck with the problem of gifts for a faraway family of which they knew little. Oh, sure, they would have begun, like us, by coming up with lots of imaginative possibilities: they would have sat down, weeks before, with a papyrus pad and a nice sharp quill, and, Caspar having pointed out that Joseph was a carpenter, Melchior and Balthazar would doubtless have agreed that a state-of-the-art toolbox was just the job, or a fabulous multi-purpose drill, possibly a folding wheelchair, just that downy nose what about Mary, lingerie is always a winner, you can't go wrong with a nightie, or perhaps a peignoir, perfect, she'll have the baby by then of course, a wide choice there, romper-suits, mobiles, bouncer, pull-along duck...

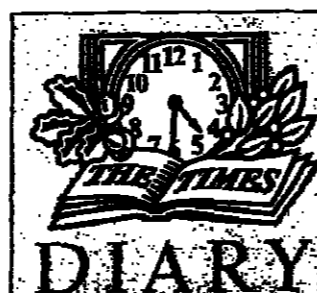
The list complete, they gird their loins, and pop down to the shops. But lo! there are windows full of 87 different sorts of toolbox and 23 assorted folding workbenches, there are lingerie emporia with 100 nighties, which material, which colour, what's her size, you go in, no you, why me, what do I know about women's things, let's get the baby's present first, blimey, look at that, the place is packed, there must be a million screaming kids in there, I feel dizzy, Caspar, my heart's going like the clappers, Melchior, I have come out in a muck-sweat Balthazar, tell you what, why don't we sit down somewhere, have a drink, two possibly, it is no good rushing these things, we could do ourselves a mischief, well just sort ourselves out and come back later when it's not so busy, yes, try up for that, me too, call a came! So, do they go back? Of course they don't. On the way home, they pass their local branch of Orient'RUUS, oh look, spot on, we can get everything we want here, so in they run. And while they find, of course, no power tools, no nighties, no toys, there is gold, always an acceptable gift, Caspar, and from someone, can't go wrong with female fragrances, Melchior, and what's that box next to it, the label says, myrrh, what's myrrh when it's at home, Balthazar, who cares, what does it matter, he's only a kid.

What a Koo

HALF squirming, half chuffed, the Duke of York will be fiddling with his television receiver: Koo Stark, his lively former amour, plans a TV showdown with Sarah Ferguson (below left). The one-time star of candid films has been granted a television chat show. Top of Koo's guest-list to appear on *Stark Images* is the Duchess of York, the lady who ensnared Andrew for a while at least. Miss Stark (right), who will interview her guests while photographing them on the ITV2 programme, believes she is the right person for a heart-to-heart: "I want to find out who the real person is," Koo tells me. "Some people are camera-shy but I aim to go beyond the camera to generate a real sense of trust."

Now that Fergie is enjoying success with her own *Sarah* chat show, Koo is keen not to enter into direct competition with her successor to the royal bedchamber. Best to combine forces, says an executive producer: "Koo and the duchess would make a terrific combination and we hope Sarah will agree." A friend of the duchess discloses that the two ladies meet frequently to discuss the complexities of the Universe. "They know each other and are fond of each other," Sarah is expected to look kindly on Koo's proposal.

If the duchess wavers, Koo can call up Aurora Cecil, Andrew's latest flame, with whom Miss Stark recently attended dinner. Miss Stark claims Bob Geldof and Eric Clapton as satisfied customers of her snaps and a generous incentive is placed before Sarah: "Everyone who comes on the show will be given the finished portrait."



play. "It is by Keith Waterhouse called *Bing Bong*. It is about two ageing, failing scriptwriters, but it is not autobiographical."

Lady's chapel

BARONESS THATCHER has been having chats with God in the Queen's chapel. Most Sundays she swings by in a limo to the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace. Just before matins, a motorcade sweeps into the courtyard, scattering tourists and worshippers while the odd duke sidles in unnoticed. The Thatchers are shown to a front pew, reserved for the Royal Household (the Queen tends to be at Windsor). Courtiers bunch up chivalrously to make room. Sir Denis divides his concentration between the coat of arms on the ceiling and the land of nod. The

collection bag startles the former PM. A swift dig in the ribs sends Denis delving in his pocket.

So does this mean we have become a royal? Not so, says Buck House: "If the Royal Family is not present, the seats are allocated to parishioners." I'm sure a commoner would be made to feel equally welcome.

● A TROUPE of British ex-pats is putting on a panto in Santiago. Just a Molotov cocktail from the British Embassy, the stage is often lit up by the light of flag-burning caused by General Pinochet's en-



"Old Sinclair has grown a foot since I last saw him!"

forced sojourn in Surrey. Show White has never been so gripping.

Left hook

THAT naughty leftist Mark Seddon, *Tribune* Editor and National Executive shaker, has angered the PM. "Blair complained about a Seddon article," I hear. "Blair told Seddon you can make these criticisms and you're entitled to do so, but we're not going back into the past and I'm not going to put up with you calling me a control freak!" Confused looks. The PM then moaned about the headline. Seddon replied that he was not responsible for the headline, only the text. "I don't care," Blair replied. "I won't have it." Then John Prescott joined in with a complaint about an article by your old Seddon in another organ.

Head of steam

MAKING the most of her connections with the railways, Jenny Agutter has leapt aboard the campaign to highlight inadequate train services. "It's just terribly expensive," says Agutter. *The Railway Children* star who regularly travels between her home on the Lizard and London. "Going down to Cornwall on a Friday evening



well, I am not a railway enthusiast, but only if it could be said that the railway is a good thing. I am not a railway enthusiast, but only if it could be said that the railway is a good thing. I am not a railway enthusiast, but only if it could be said that the railway is a good thing.

JASPER GERARD



STRAW AND THE LAW

The Pinochet case casts a long political shadow

Today Jack Straw is expected to announce whether to halt extradition proceedings against General Pinochet or give the courts his "authority to proceed". He will be acting under the 1989 Extradition Act, wearing the Home Secretary's quasi-judicial hat. But this decision will be the most politically charged of his career. Whatever he does, he must gloomily expect to be pilloried. The general's ghost will haunt him for months, if not years, to come.

If he lets the case go ahead, it will be an interminable process. Should judgment then go against the former Chilean dictator, when all legal appeals have been exhausted it must again fall to Mr Straw to decide whether to sign the extradition order to Spain. If he calls a halt now, he must expect uproar in his party — and a prosecution lawyers' race to the courts to prevent the general's departure to Chile until appeals have been heard. Legally, Section 7 (4) of the Act gives him little discretion at this stage, beyond deciding whether an extradition order could "lawfully be made". That includes whether the alleged offences are extraditable crimes, on which the Lords of Appeal have given broadly positive guidance; whether the Spanish request was properly authorised; and whether there are compassionate grounds for quashing the warrants.

What the Home Secretary cannot do is to take political considerations overtly into account, without risking a humiliating reversal in the courts. Yet this case's political dimensions have been obvious ever since the first arrest warrant was issued on October 16. They were certainly obvious to the five law lords who were called upon last month to decide whether General Pinochet's alleged crimes were so appalling as to deprive him of the immunity accorded to former heads of state. And their ruling that he had no immunity has been made more politically contentious still by the association with Amnesty of Lord Hoffmann. Amnesty has not only campaigned for extradition; its

lawyers argued the case before the Lords. Lord Hoffmann, a director of Amnesty for the past seven years, had originally been empanelled, with the other four judges, to hear an asylum appeal, postponed to find time for this ruling. He has a robust reputation for intellectual independence. But it was open to him to restle from the Pinochet case. In the event — and, uncharacteristically, without setting out his legal reasons — his decision was to determine the narrow and otherwise closely argued 3-2 verdict.

Lord Hoffmann's political background has thus become part of the tangled web that the Pinochet case has woven round questions of sovereignty, Parliament and the law. This affair has huge consequences, not only for international law but as a pointer to the ways in which the role of the judiciary will change once the Human Rights Act enters into force next year. In this country, unlike the United States, a judge's political views have been accepted as his private business. Because the Act will greatly enlarge the powers of the courts, that is unlikely to continue.

Judges trained in a tradition which requires them to interpret laws on the basis of precedent, but not to challenge them, will be called to judge the compatibility of Acts of Parliament with the broad-brush European Convention on Human Rights which the Act incorporates. They will be confronted, in the Lord Chancellor's words, with legal choices which "offer immense scope for political and philosophical disagreement". The political views of individual judges are bound to come under scrutiny. At the least, more sensitivity about resting from cases will be required than Lord Hoffmann has shown. That will not be all. The more power shifts from Parliament to the courts, the stronger will be demands for public vetting of judicial appointments — and that could further politicise the judiciary. This is the least of Mr Straw's worries today; but the Pinochet case illuminates legal minefields ahead.

DEATH IN CHECHNYA

Dangers against which no precautions can be adequate

The decapitation of four hostages, three British and one New Zealander, in Chechnya is an act as repugnant as it is gruesome. These murders underline how endemic is the banditry in this breakaway Russian republic. They are testimony not only to the danger to all travellers there, but to the Chechen leaders' inability to curb kidnappings and organised murder sweeping right through the North Caucasus.

More than 100 Russians are still held captive there. This year alone some 176 people have been kidnapped, including dozens of foreigners. Some 90 have been released. But yesterday's killings, the first of any foreigners since the end of the war against Moscow's rule, are a grisly signal of an intensifying struggle that can only set back efforts to free the remaining captives.

The events surrounding the men's death are murky, though stories of a botched rescue and of assassinations by the kidnappers after their position was betrayed to government forces sound all too likely. For Aslan Maskhadov, the Chechen leader, the killings are a disaster. A relative moderate who has urged the West to invest in his ravaged country, he knows that nothing can now erase the image of a brutal and uncontrolled society.

He has blamed "foreign special forces" — meaning Russian intelligence agents — for the murders. The theory should not be dismissed: a thirst for vengeance for the deaths and humiliation of the 1994-96 war still grips some Russians. Many Chechens

argue that only by sabotaging any attempt to set up a functioning Chechen administration can Moscow hope to regain the upper hand on its strategic southern flank.

Suspicion falls more obviously on the extremist Islamic groups engaged in a bitter struggle with Mr Maskhadov for control of the republic. These groups want to impose a strict Islamic republic and oppose any compromise with Moscow. Funded largely from abroad and drawing on Islamic terrorist connections, they have exploited poverty and despair to raise funds by kidnapping and to take on government forces in armed clashes. The killing of the four hostages is calculated to undermine Mr Maskhadov, who was recently making inroads into their power.

Britain has repeatedly warned its citizens not to go to Chechnya; short of confiscating their passports, it cannot prevent people taking foolish risks, as the four men working for the telecommunications firm did. They paid a terrible price that should weigh on the conscience of their company. British companies who want to do business in Chechnya should bring Chechens to this country for training. If they must have personnel on the ground, they need to recognise that an absolute refusal to pay ransom is as elementary a precaution as armed bodyguards. Their staff must be made aware that nothing can guarantee security; only a long-term political settlement can restore some calm to the ruined landscape. And that could take years.

WITHOUT CARE

How a community ideal might be brought back to reality

What began as a general kindness has ended in a thousand cruelties. Care in the community was an idea fostered by a mood of compassion. Locked wards and padded cells no longer seemed an appropriate response to mental illness. The Thatcher Government's move to close down asylums, devolving care for their inmates on to a broader society, was intended to further a humane experiment initiated by the passing of the Mental Health Act in 1959. But a libertarian crusade became a public liability as money saved by the emptying of psychiatric beds was not funnelled back into community care. The human cost of this failed initiative has been incalculable.

The reforms announced yesterday by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, marked a sensible compromise between flawed modern ideals and outmoded institutionalisation. For too many patients, care in the community came to mean not supervised housing and skilled counsellors, but a life of lonely struggle. As they were shunted from one squalid bedsit to another, or resorted to families breaking under the strain, their mental condition declined. Public concern about crime committed by psychiatric patients rose.

Addressing this concern, Mr Dobson announced the creation of hundreds more beds and small secure units where patients may be sent without need of being certified. Trained staff are to target those currently lost to the service, and monitoring is to be further improved by the creation of telephone helplines and outreach teams.

New legislation will give doctors authority to force patients to accept treatment and close the loophole whereby those with untreatable personality disorders can refuse to be sent to hospital.

This formula is a fine one. But it depends crucially on finance. Although the extra £700 million pledged over a three-year period (£146 million of which is to be spent in the first year), will provide a powerful kickstart to Mr Dobson's reforms, it will not reach far. Sufficient new beds alone could swallow the first year's budget. Modern drugs are expensive. Too many of Britain's 50,000 sufferers of schizophrenia are still prescribed such old-style medications as Largactil or Stelazine. Though cheap, these have severe side-effects, causing physical twitching and mental numbness. Far more effective are such up-to-date prescriptions as Clozapine. But this costs £3,000 a year per patient.

In the wake of such high profile crimes as the murder of Lin Russell and her daughter Megan by a violent psychopath, the public will be quick to applaud the Government's latest initiative. But an emphasis on crime must not be allowed to add to the social stigma already suffered by the mentally ill. Home Office reports suggest that the number of murders committed by the insane has not increased over the past 20 years. A reasoned perspective must be maintained. Care in the community needs public provision and public compassion. Both have been allowed to fall too low.

Constitutional change decided 'behind closed doors'

From Viscount Mountgarret

Sir, As a member of the cross benches I, like I suspect many others from all walks of life, am deeply saddened by the unedifying events last week at Westminster. The British people deserve better than to see 800 years of constitutional history decided behind closed doors by a cabal, or indeed in a few hours' debate in either or both Houses of Parliament, especially where some speakers may have a particular axe to grind.

Mr Hague, rightly, reiterated what I thought was the Conservative position, namely that they would agree to no change of the constitution of the House of Lords until there had been a royal commission drawn from all peers and from constitutional lawyers, to study in depth the whole question of parliamentary reform. Then and only then should the matter be put to the vote.

That position was completely undermined, and now regrettably we see signs that Mr Hague may, as his arm is being twisted by some on the Conservative front bench of the House of Lords, adopt, at least in part, "the Cranborne plan".

Even the cross benches, led by Lord Weatherill, are proposing to table an amendment for such an adoption. It seems, therefore, that this plan, devised by a few, will become substantially supported, at least by the House of Lords, and the demise of that noble House will proceed with indecent haste.

I appeal for everyone to slow down. Reforms are clearly necessary, but if we really are so keen on the principle that our rulers should all be democratically elected and representative, why then are we prepared to accept the way this country is governed and directed by those unelected and unrepresentative commissioners in Brussels?

Yours faithfully,
MOUNTGARRET,
House of Lords,
December 7.

From Mr Richard G. Tudor

Sir, The Opposition has clearly demonstrated its acceptance of the inevitable. The non-elected Lords are to go. But to see Baroness Jay of Paddington parading in front of the upper chamber begs the question of who selected and elected her.

Now is the time for the Tories to go for a fully democratic second House whose members can fall by the will of the people. With so many lawyers in the Government, it is an opportune time for a considered review of the British constitution.

Yours faithfully,
R. G. TUDOR,
The Lodge, Great Aine,
Warwickshire B49 6HR,
December 3.

From Lord Bethell

Sir, Your Political Correspondent tells us today that "the Government will make plain its preference for a part-time, part-selected chamber when it sets the terms of reference for the commission." This is welcome news, so far as it goes.

However, as we prepare to pass on the torch after many centuries, hereditary peers would do well to press the Prime Minister for assurances before allowing him clear passage for his Bill.

Will the second chamber eventually be democratically legitimate — fully elected, in other words? Or will it contain placements nominated by party leaders? Will it check and balance the Prime Minister's edicts, or merely rephrase and reinforce them?

At the moment Mr Blair seems keen to keep all the present life peers, but only 100 or so hereditaries, on his "through train". But he gives us no hint of how long the journey will take or what the final destination will be. This is dangerous. The hereditaries should not be bought off with a reprieve of a few years, while the "lifers" are allowed to stay on

indefinitely.

The massacre of the hereditaries is upon us, but the "lifers" should meanwhile at least be culled. True, many of them are excellent. But they are there, mostly, as present or former friends of a prime minister. It is said that they are there on merit. But we have surely passed the day when anyone should be made a legislator for life.

Mr Hague is said to favour an elected second chamber. This is good. A politician, unless elected, cannot fully do his job. Most hereditary peers realise this and they should now join Mr Hague in explaining this to Mr Blair. The House of Commons needs constructive challenge, not massage, from a second chamber.

Yours sincerely,
NICHOLAS BETHELL,
House of Lords,
December 8.

From Mr Roger Kendrick

Sir, Is it not remarkable that first Mr Ashdown and now Lord Cranborne are seemingly oblivious to Mr Blair's policy of divide and rule?

Yours sincerely,
ROGER KENDRICK,
Braye House, Egypt Lane,
Farnham Common,
Buckinghamshire SL2 3LF,
December 7.

From Mr Richard Fox-Bekerman

Sir, I have become used to the idea that professional politicians need show no particular knowledge of, or competence in, economics, the health service, education, defence, transport or social policy. However, I find it curious when they appear to be not very good at politics either.

Yours faithfully,
R. FOX-BEKERMAN,
25 Orchard Street, Dorset DT1 1JH,
December 5.

Pinochet and Amnesty

From Mr Peter Curnock

Sir, Although the distinction between justice being done and justice being seen to be done was not one which General Pinochet's opponents generally had the opportunity to reflect upon, let alone argue, Pinochet himself is entitled to rely on it if he is to be made the subject of extradition proceedings in England.

The integrity and intellectual rigour which Lord Hoffmann and the four other law lords brought to the Pinochet appeal are not in doubt. However, once Amnesty International was given leave by the law lords to make representations in the course of the appeal, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Lord Hoffmann's position became untenable.

The fact that he was a director of Amnesty International Charity Limited may well have been a matter of public record, or even of public knowledge, and those representing General Pinochet should, if they were aware of this and had they then been concerned about Lord Hoffmann's continued involvement, have raised the matter then. However, the prime responsibility for declaring such an interest lies with the judge.

It is disappointing that, in addition to having the finger pointed at the United Kingdom by Chile as the country responsible for the position in which Pinochet now finds himself (when in fact the responsibility is Spain's), Pinochet's supporters appear now to have been provided with the opportunity to suggest that the English judicial system has also failed him.

Yours faithfully,
P. C. CURNOCK,
12 Great James Street, WC1N 3DR,
December 8.

Embattled envoy

From Ms Dale Egge

Sir, Sir David Gore-Booth (report, "Somebody is out to get me, says envoy", December 7) was the best Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Britain has had in his 20 years' experience.

It is well known how hard he worked on the BAE al-Yamamah project. What is less known was his efforts to promote UK Ltd through SMEs (small and middle-size enterprises). Those of us who marketed our companies' products, travelling with DTI-sponsored trade missions, remember him as one of the rare ambassadors who actually attended the receptions for British business people, lending his presence and clout to our efforts.

In addition, he promoted the idea of British women doing business in Saudi Arabia. The first British women's trade mission there was a direct spin-off from this.

I think that Britain cannot afford to lose a man like this.

Yours faithfully,
DALE EGGE, Director,
Egee Art Consultancy,
9 Chelsea Manor Studios,
Flood Street, SW3 5SR,
December 7.

Business letters, page 29

Letters may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Out of sight and off the charts

From Sir Tim Rice and Lord Lloyd-Webber

Sir, For nearly half a century the British pop singles music charts have provided an accurate, informative and enjoyable guide to the most popular recordings of the day. Whether a song remained in vogue for six months or one week, its standing with the affections of the public was faithfully and honestly recorded.

Over the past few years this tradition has been destroyed by the majority of this country's record companies. Polydor have recently, against the express wishes of the song's creators, reduced the price of the former number one single, *No Matter What*, by Boyzone to £1.78, thus forcing it out of the charts, which do not register records selling for less than £1.79 (itself an absurdity).

The company, clearly believing that neither they nor Boyzone can maintain success without such devices, have made a highly popular record almost invisible, in the hope that frustrated record buyers will unthinkingly hand over their cash for the next recording.

This and many other cynical decisions have made the UK Top Forty little more than a guide to the most successful record company marketing departments, most of whom regard singles as nothing more than trailers for albums.

Albums may generate more income, but in the long term the downgrading of the individual hit song will be disastrous for our music industry. The Beatles opened up the world for British music with wonderful songs, and no one complained if nine or ten of their tunes were selling simultaneously.

Songs are the lifeblood of the British music industry. Most contemporary record companies treat songwriters, artists and the public with near contempt, never daring to sign a new talent on the strength of one great tune.

It is no coincidence that this week is the least successful British week on the American charts for 25 years. Our native musical talent is not to blame.

TIM RICE,
ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER,
The Really Useful Group Ltd,
22 Tower Street,
London WC2H 9NF,
December 4.

Translators' award

From the Principal of St Anne's College, Oxford

Sir, You gave a clear account of national failure to value translators and translation of world literature (report, "A talent lost in translation", December 2). There is, however, good news from Oxford. A recently established Weidenfeld Translation Prize is open to translators of a work of fiction, poetry or drama written in any living European language by any author living or dead.

The translation must be into the English language. It may be the work of up to three translators. The previous winners were Guido Waldman for his translation of *Silk* by Alessandro Baricco and Colin Smith for his translation of *The King Amara'd* by Gonzalo Torrente Ballester.

The prize attracts a large number of entries and is judged by experts in Oxford, chaired by Dr David Constantine. The jury considers not only the quality of the translation but also the quality and importance of the original work and the value of its being put into circulation in English.

Yours sincerely,
RUTH DEECH,
Principal,
St Anne's College, Oxford OX2 6HS,
December 4.

Reading help

From the Chair of the Inner London Branch of Volunteer Reading Help

Sir, For nearly eight years I have been working as a volunteer reading helper in Inner London. Our branch is one of 36 across the country with a total of just under 2,000 volunteers helping primary school children with their reading on a one-to-one basis (letters, December 5).

During my time in Camden I have been offered a variety of excuses by my "charges" for not wanting to read on a particular day. The best came only the other week when Daniel announced that he couldn't continue any more because "My lips are tired".

Yours faithfully,
JUDY HOUGH,
Chair,
Inner London Branch,
Volunteer Reading Help,
31 Meadowbank,
Primrose Hill Road, NW3 3AY,
December 6.

Oeufs en concrete

From Mrs Maureen Harkavy

Sir, In replying to Dr David Keeling's delicious postscript in today's letters, all I can say is "faire un oeuf".

Yours faithfully,
MAUREEN HARKAVY,
The Plovers,
Grange Lane,
Alveschurch, Womersleyshire B48 7DJ,
moharkavy@btinternet.com,
December 7.

Oxford conservation

From the Registrar of the University of Oxford

Sir, It seems appropriate to correct some of the misleading impressions given by the letter from Sir Hugh Casson and others (December 4) about the Taylorian lecture theatre and this university's attitude to conservation.

It is accepted that the lecture theatre itself is in a listed 1930s extension to the 19th-century building which houses the Taylor Institution. Such listing does not relate to the merits of the theatre itself, and the same would be true of the new lecture theatre.

In fact, both the university's Ashmolean Museum and Taylor Institution stand to gain from an ingenious redevelopment of the Taylorian courtyard, which will furnish the Ashmolean with an important new gallery and two new staff, and the Taylorian with a brand new state-of-the-art lecture hall. It has the full backing of the university. Surely, this is Oxford attracting new funding for the very best of motives.

Moreover, the university is not proposing to site its new business school on an unexcavated medieval abbey, as your correspondents allege.

Britain's health

From Air Commodore Alastair Mackie (retd)

Sir, Having told us how poorly our health compares with that of the 13 countries above us in the Economic Intelligence Unit's list, your report "Sickly Britain lags behind in health league", December 4) suggests that our lowly place is due to our comparative lack of doctors, nurses and hospitals. Stephen Thornton of the NHS Confederation compounds the error by calling for more medical resources and describing their cost as "health" spending.

Health spending is not throwing money at the NHS. It is, rather, using resources to ease the pressures and change the habits that cause us to overload it. Heart disease, cancer and sexually transmitted disease have

allies such as a food industry which has made some 40 per cent of us disease-prone through obesity; cigarette-makers whose scarcely restrained sponsorships keep smoking fashionable; and brewers who, amongst others, have so intertwined their product with sex that many, it seems, think that one cannot be enjoyed without the other and none of us gets enough of either.

Our place in the EIU league table will stay as awful as it is until we improve our pathetic attempts to control reckless anti-health blarney and counter them with more and better advice about how to stay well.

Yours faithfully,
ALASTAIR MACKIE
(Director General,
Health Education Council, 1972-81),
4 Warwick Drive, SW15 6LB,
December 5.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID HOLMES,
Registrar,
University of Oxford,
University Offices,
Wellington Square,
Oxford OX1 2JD,
December 4.

Short in China

From Lord Redesdale

Sir, It seems incredible, after the debacles of Pergau and arms to Iraq, and the subsequent changes in Conservative government policy to make sure they never happened again, that Gary Streeter, the Shadow International Development Secretary, is now trying to make political capital out of Clare Short's failure to promote British business interests on her recent visit to China [reports, December 7 and 8].

Whilst such promotion is important, breaking the link between aid and trade has to be at the heart of an ethical development policy. Perhaps John Redwood, who has called for the Prime Minister to discipline Mr Short, has failed to spot that the DFID is not the DTI.

Yours faithfully,
REDESDALE
(Liberal Democrat Spokesperson on International Development),
House of Lords,
December 7.

Chadwick's inspiration

From Mr Stephen J. Suttle

Sir, In 1977, when an assistant master at Stowe, I was instructed by the Headmaster to ask Dr John Chadwick (obituary, December 2) to give a talk to the school's Classical Society on his collaboration with the late Michael Ventris (who had been a pupil at the school) in the decipherment of Linear B. I thought such a dry topic distinctly unpromising, and it was with considerable misgivings that I arranged his visit and put a three-line whip on the school's classists.

In the event the evening was a great success. Dr Chadwick established an immediate rapport with his audience and gave a fascinating and memorable talk, in which he brought the subject urgently to life. He was not only a brilliant academic but also an inspirational teacher.

Yours faithfully,
S. J. SUTTLE,
Middle Farm, Rimpdon,
Ycovil, Somerset BA22 8AB.



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE December 8: The Queen held an investiture at Buckingham Palace this morning... Her Royal Highness, Patron of the National Coaching Foundation...



Abby Baker of Bonhams peeps through a window of Cairngorm Castle, an impressive six-roomed Scottish baronial castle with a tower, built in late 19th-century style...

Forthcoming marriages

Mr R.J. Barlas and Miss C.A. Bain The engagement is announced between Richard John, younger son of Mr and Mrs Jack Barlas...

Royal engagements

The Duke of Edinburgh, senior fellow, will present the Royal Academy of Engineering Medal Robert Award at Buckingham Palace at 10.30...

Birthdays today

Ms Beverly Anderson, education consultant and broadcaster, 58; Miss Joan Armatrading, singer, 48; Sir Nicholas Bonsor, former MP...

Dinners

National Liberal Club Mr Alan Balfour, MP, was the guest at a dinner of the National Liberal Club held last night at Whitehall Place...

Marriage

Mr E.B.B. Vickers and Miss L.E. Polk The marriage took place on Friday, December 4, 1998, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception...

Luncheons

Mr Frank Law Mr Frank Law gave a luncheon at Brookley's yesterday. The guests were: The Ambassador of Germany, Lord Baker...

Reception

Torch Trophy Trust The Duke of Kent presented the Torch Trophy Trust Awards for 1998 last night at a reception held at Simpson (Piccadilly) Ltd...

Latest wills

The Rev Sir James Roll, Vicar of St John's Church, 193-83, of Leigh on Sea, Essex, left estate valued at £5,387,216 net...

Church news

The Rev Brendan David Clover, Priest-in-Charge at St Pancras with St James and Christ Church and St Francis Holy Cross with St Jude and St Peter in the London diocese...

Anniversaries

BIRTHS: John Milton, poet, London, 1608; Johann Winckelmann, archaeologist, Stendal, Germany, 1717; Carl Schlegel, chemist, discoverer of oxygen, Stralsund, Germany, 1742...

Royal Association in Aid of Deaf People

The London Diocesan Deaf Choir, RAD Gillingham Deaf Choir, the RAD Clapham Choir and the Choir of the Royal School for Deaf Children, Margate, sang and signed the carols throughout the service...

BMDS: 0171 680 6880 PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

PERSONAL COLUMN

TRADE: 0171 481 9822 FAX: 0171 481 9313

BIRTHS: Happy the people who have learnt to accept you, who walk in the light of your countenance... DEATHS: BIRKTHS: John Milton, poet, London, 1608; Johann Winckelmann, archaeologist, Stendal, Germany, 1717...

DEATHS: CAMERON - Diana, quietly in a Nursing Home at West London, 12.30, aged 50. Much loved sister, aunt, godmother and friend... GEMMELL - Col. Geoffrey Woodburn (Jeffery Army retired - Surrey of India), husband of Mrs. G. Woodburn, died peacefully at home in Surrey on December 8th in his 102nd year...

DEATHS: MAURICE - Evelyn (née Phillips) A.R.C., peacefully at home on December 8th, aged 92. Wife of the late Captain Robin Maurice DSO, DFC, RN, was much loved by all. Burial at St. Mark's Church, Broadwater, Essex, on December 10th at 11.00 am. All friends are invited to attend.

DEATHS: WALLACE GREG - 90th birthday in her 90th year, beloved mother and grandmother, passed peacefully at home on Monday December 7th 1998. Family flowers on Monday December 14th 12 noon. Family flowers on Tuesday December 15th 12 noon. Family flowers on Wednesday December 16th 12 noon. Family flowers on Thursday December 17th 12 noon. Family flowers on Friday December 18th 12 noon. Family flowers on Saturday December 19th 12 noon. Family flowers on Sunday December 20th 12 noon. Family flowers on Monday December 21st 12 noon. Family flowers on Tuesday December 22nd 12 noon. Family flowers on Wednesday December 23rd 12 noon. Family flowers on Thursday December 24th 12 noon. Family flowers on Friday December 25th 12 noon. Family flowers on Saturday December 26th 12 noon. Family flowers on Sunday December 27th 12 noon. Family flowers on Monday December 28th 12 noon. Family flowers on Tuesday December 29th 12 noon. Family flowers on Wednesday December 30th 12 noon. 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To place death notices, acknowledgements or notices please call 0171 680 6880

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS: MURPHY - The funeral of Mrs. Murphy will be held at 2.00pm on 10th December at 2.00pm. All will be welcome to attend.

OBITUARIES

AIR COMMODORE MICHAEL WIGHT-BOYCOTT GORDON MCKENZIE

Air Commodore Michael Wight-Boycott, CBE, DSO and Bar, wartime night fighter pilot, died on December 2 aged 88. He was born on August 18, 1910.

After the successful repulse of a heavy German air raid on southern England on the night of January 16-17, 1943, Michael Wight-Boycott found himself an instant hero for his leadership of No 29 Squadron, whose Beaufighters had broken up the attack. He himself was credited with four combat victories that night, a truly astonishing figure. In fact the figure was later reassessed as three enemy aircraft shot down and one damaged, a downgrading of his initial claim with which Wight-Boycott had no quarrel. He had flown part of the night's second sortie without oxygen when his supply became accidentally disconnected, and he was suffering from anoxia when the third Dornier Do217 he attacked appeared to him to catch fire and go down in flames over the sea.

Indeed the aircraft may well have been destroyed - Aces High (1966), the record of the British and Commonwealth fighter aces of the Second World War, credits him with four kills that night. But it was entirely in character for Wight-Boycott not to insist on a claim that could not be substantiated beyond all doubt. He was an utterly modest man, never more so than about the pilot's role in night fighting.

To keep from the Germans the fact that the RAF's Beaufighters had highly effective onboard radar which enabled them to make their interceptions, the Air Ministry put it about that its pilots had developed extraordinary night vision from their diet of raw carrots, consumed daily. This led to such myths as that of "Cats-Eyes Cunningham", one of the most successful of the night fighter pilots, while Wight-Boycott became known as "the Flying Policeman" - from his prewar service with the Met.

It irked him that his observer, Tony Sanders, who had steered the targets on his radar screen and guided him to the visual interception, received less credit - a DFC to Wight-Boycott's DSO - for that night's work. "In fact it was entirely

due to Tony that on my night out he had provided me with seven visuals of which only three were properly dispatched by me," he later self-effacingly wrote. "But airborne interception was the subject of the strictest security - and the myth of the carrot-eating night-fighters remained in the public domain until the end of the war. Cathcart Michael Wight-Boycott was educated at Marlborough College and Clare College, Cambridge, where he learnt to fly with the University Air Squadron in the early 1930s. From 1932 to 1939 he was a civil servant with the CID at Scotland Yard, but when the RAFVR was formed in 1937 he was one of the first pilots to receive a commission.

He was called up in 1939 but had 18 months as a flying instructor before, in April 1941, he got his first chance of combat, with 219 Squadron, a Beaufighter night fighting unit. He had his first combat victory in September that year when he shot down a Ju88.

In 1942 he was appointed squadron commander of 29 Squadron, and it was there that he teamed up with Tony Sanders as his observer. They were to prove a lethal combination in the air. The celebrated air defence action of January 16-17, 1943, came about as a result of a German reaction to an RAF raid the previous night. Two hundred British bombers had gone to Berlin, the first major attack on the city for more than a year. It was also, thanks to the introduction of the Lancaster into the assault, able to deliver a far greater tonnage of bombs than any of its predecessors.

Hitler was personally enraged at the damage and demanded immediate Luftwaffe reprisals. Luftflotte 3 was ordered to deliver the first big air attack on London since July 1941. Like most operations conceived in haste and anger, it was not very well thought out. While experienced crews were ordered to attack the Royal Docks and the Isle of Dogs, the novices were given vague instructions to bomb concentrations of searchlights, assuming they might cloak important targets. British intelligence had moreover forewarned the night fighter defences.



Michael Wight-Boycott in 1943, a sketch by William Rothenstein

Nevertheless, the odds were still daunting for the defenders. The Luftwaffe threw a mass of bomber squadrons into the attack, supported by swarms of Ju88 night fighters. However, Wight-Boycott had his squadron airborne early to meet this threat, and was in a position to intercept the raiders at 15,000ft, 20 miles off Dungeness. From that moment, Wight-Boycott and Sanders had their hands full, the observer identifying targets and vectoring his skipper towards them. Their first victim was a Dornier Do217, which succumbed to two short bursts from the Beaufighter's formidable battery of four 30mm cannon and six .303 machineguns. Three more Dorniers were attacked that night, but as Wight-Boycott came in on the third of them his aircraft went out of control in its slipstream, and in his desperate efforts to steady it, he accidentally brushed his oxygen supply valve with his elbow. The next few minutes were spent in a semi-daze as he wrestled to control a yawing high-performance aircraft with an oxygen-starved brain. Luckily, he noticed the defect before blacking out completely and was able to turn the supply back on. "I immediately regained my zest for combat," he recalled, and a luckless Ju88 was to be the victim of this resurgence of martial ardour. However, as Wight-Boycott would have been the first to admit, not without the radar interpretation skills of Sanders.

Indeed the following day's headlines, "Flying Policeman Caught Four in One Night", were something of an embarrassment to him, as were the sackloads of fan mail received by his parents and a summons to Broadcasting House to describe his adventures over the air. When it came to writing the citation for his DSO, normally the Station Commander's job, he felt compelled to demur, and it was written instead by the famous South African ace "Sailor" Malan, then commanding Biggin Hill.

Wight-Boycott was rested from operations at the end of January 1943, but was back in the following year, in charge of 25 (Mosquito) Squadron. Among his subsequent victims was the one of the Luftwaffe's fast and manoeuvrable Me410 strike fighters. But No 25 was later allotted the task of intercepting VIs by night, a difficult task as the mark of Mosquito being flown by the squadron was no faster than the flying bomb in level flight and had to pick it up on radar and swoop from above to make an interception. Nevertheless, Wight-Boycott shot down two VIs and ended the war with a Bar to his DSO.

In 1945 he was invited to rejoin the CID, but flying was in his blood, and he declined. He was granted a permanent commission and went on to have a successful postwar career in operational and staff posts. With the coming of the jet age it was a particular satisfaction to him to fly Meteor night fighters.

His final appointment, Commandant Royal Observer Corps, initially filled him with misgiving as it sounded like a dead end. But he enjoyed the work, as it took him all over the country. In retirement he was Wing Commander Flying Training in the Air Training Corps. And he continued as a full-time reservist until his final retirement in 1975, enjoying flying light trainers and gliders. He finally retired to Somerset, where he enjoyed gardening, bird watching, the defence of local rights of way and working for the Samaritans. He is survived by his wife Val, and by two sons and two daughters.

Gordon McKenzie, newspaperman, died on December 3 aged 80. He was born on December 28, 1917.

GORDON MCKENZIE had one of the most creative and exciting minds in modern British newspapers. As leader of a team of writers who became the envy of Fleet Street he played a decisive (if hidden) part in making the Daily Mail the force it is today in popular journalism. Even when he officially retired in 1983, he continued with the Mail until 1995, advising on some of its more notable book serialisations. Gordon McKenzie was born in Carmachmore, Aberdeenshire. His first newspaper job, as a trainee reporter, he secured in 1935 at the Bon Accord in Aberdeen, and then he moved to the Aberdeen Press and Journal. His later genius was to lie in cossetting, steering, encouraging, driving forward the talents of others. One consequence of this was that he rarely talked of his own achievements.

Few knew that he volunteered for the Gordon Highlanders at the start of the Second World War, later became a major in the Durham Light Infantry, fought in North Africa and Italy and was mentioned in despatches at the Battle of Cassino.

At the end of the war he returned to the Aberdeen Press and Journal, where the management said the paper was under no obligation to give him his job back but nevertheless generously decided to take him on again as a reporter. He responded with a phlegmatic expression of his appreciation.

Back on the reporter's beat in Aberdeen, he went to interview an actress who was appearing in a play there. It was love at first sight. They married in 1947 and they celebrated their golden wedding last year. McKenzie's move to London came as London editor of the Press and Journal. In that job he became the first journalist to gain an interview with Queen Mary, then the Queen Mother. At the end of the 1940s he was made personal assistant to C. D. (later Sir Denis) Hamilton, the newly appointed Editorial Director of Kemsley Newspapers, who soon afterwards chose McKen-

zie to be Editor of the Sunday Chronicle. At 33, he was the youngest editor in Fleet Street. By 1956 he was editing another Kemsley paper, the Sunday Graphic. But the real fulfilment of his talents was to come a year or two later when he joined Associated Newspapers (the Mail group). He was assistant editor of the Sunday Dispatch and then, in 1958, joined the Daily Mail itself as assistant editor. He ultimately became the paper's executive editor, having established himself as "the greatest features man in the business", Bernard Levin, Vincent Mul-



chone, Barry Norman, Godfrey Winn and the cartoonist Ilingworth were among those who benefited from the wealth of ideas that flowed from his fertile mind. McKenzie went on to interpret brilliantly the vision of Vere Rothermere and David English in giving the Daily Mail as strong an appeal to women as to men. With the post-1970 era came famous new names - Lynda Lee-Potter, Ann Leslie and many others. McKenzie was always the immaculate professional. He was a lover of style - not just in writing but in his brava dress, in his relish for claret and malt whiskies and in his love of books. He took pride in showing off his library (and his Fleet Street memories) at the regular Sunday lunch parties that he held almost to the end of his life at his Buckinghamshire home. He is survived by his wife Vicki and a son.

HANS HEVESI

He returned to England in 1961 as a lecturer at the Royal College of Art, teaching the history of science. One day he told his class about trance cults in Africa and how in the last century Zulus had used trance techniques to cure anorexia. A pupil then confessed to him that she was anorexic and asked him to cure her by putting her into a trance. After some hesitation he tried, and to their astonishment he succeeded. Three further successes persuaded him to resign his lecturership, and he devoted the rest of his life to psychotherapy, incidentally following in the steps of his sister Tilla in America.



Hevesi was an avid reader, but was unable to fit his patients into any of the traditional frameworks of psychiatry or psychoanalysis. One day he read about catastrophe theory, and realised that mathematics might provide the neutral framework that he had been seeking. He contacted Professor (now Sir) Christopher Zeeman, and together they developed a model for anorexia and its cure, which they published in Scientific American in 1976. This model permitted a coherent synthesis of a large number of observations that would otherwise appear disconnected, and described the trance state in relation to other behavioural states. Thus it fulfilled the aim of science by reducing the arbitrariness of description. Hevesi claimed that his trance technique was different from hypnosis because he did not attempt to control the patient, but rather to harness her intelligence so that she could work out her own salvation (in contrast to the drug, punishment and reward schemes commonly used in hospitals). The model indicated what were likely to be operative suggestions, and other therapists who copied his methods wrote to report startling success with previously intractable cases. It is a loss that he never published his follow-up statistics or case histories.

Resides being a great reader, Hevesi was a highly original thinker, much admired by those who knew him. Among the greatest influences on his life were Franz Steiner, the poet and social anthropologist, and the author Elias Canetti, who was his friend and mentor. In 1950 Hevesi married the ballet dancer Beryl Morina, with whom he had five children. Sadly they lost their younger son to meningitis and their eldest daughter to an infection in Africa when she was 20. He was particularly affected by this latter loss, which contributed to his divorce in 1990, but he continued to live close to his family and to see them regularly. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

DORIS BEST

Doris Jourd, who as Doris Best was believed to be the first Girl Guide, died on November 6 aged 101. She was born on December 18, 1896.



Doris Jourd in the uniform she designed herself, 1908

THE impression made upon Doris Best by the adventurous activities of the Boy Scouts led to the foundation of the Girl Guide movement in Gillingham in Kent in 1908. She never lost her enthusiasm for what she had started.

Rambles through the countryside, tracking, semaphore signalling, makeshift stretcher lessons, first aid, cooking in the open on camp fires and the feeling of comradeship all appealed to her when she accompanied her mother, Alice Best, who helped the local Scoutmaster with his troop. Doris was accepted as an affiliate Scout. But returning home one evening, she asked her mother "Why can't there be Girl Scouts?", and suggested that she form a troop. Her mother had to consider the question of decorum - for at the time young girls did not engage in boyish pursuits - but she quickly acceded. The following morning, Doris bought a Boy Scout hat, a haversack and a belt. A brown blouse, navy skirt and broomstick made into a walking stick completed her uniform. The girls' neckerchiefs, they were taught, could be used as makeshift slings or signalling flags. With a copy of Scouting for Boys under her arm, Doris set off down the road to start recruiting. Soon, girls were knocking at the Bests' door, begging to join the Girl Scouts. Mrs Best made all the original uniforms by hand, and at first meetings were held in her drawing room. But as the membership increased to 60 or 70, they found they had

to hire a hall for the purpose. at Trafalgar Street, Gillingham, where they were visited on a number of occasions by Lord Baden-Powell.

Alice Best became the first Guide Captain, presented with her captain's warrant by Lord Baden-Powell at a Scouting rally held in Gillingham in 1909, when he said he had "great pleasure in presenting the first warrant to a lady". According to the Guides Association, "a lot of girls were joining the Boy Scouts in 1908 and 1909, and many girls were present at the great Crystal Palace rally held by the Scouts in 1909". The following year, the girls were all assembled and told that henceforth they were to be called Girl Guides. The first badges were awarded for semaphore, first aid, thrift, lifesaving and needlework. At first some men were opposed to the movement, with one critic dismissing it as "the most disturbing sign of the times", but it has continued to flourish, and these days has some 750,000 members in Britain alone. Doris Best married William Jourd, an Army officer, in 1914. In 1920 her husband resumed his career as a teacher, and they travelled to Johannesburg, where he became principal of a mining school. Returning to England in 1927, they settled at Whitstable, Kent, where she served as Captain of the 1st Whitstable Guides for 30 years. During this time she traced many of the original Girl Scouts, and she held annual reunions at her home until she was 80. She also worked tirelessly for the Conservative Party, as agent for the local councillor, and never losing an election. She acted in this capacity, too, until her 80th year. Doris Jourd also formed a committee for the purpose of improving the local environment. With many helpers they cleared the seashore of rubbish; overgrown sites were cleared of weeds and refuse, flowers and shrubs were planted and seats were installed. Her lifelong drive and determination, and her spirited sense of humour, always enabled her to drum up enthusiasm. Her husband predeceased her, but she is survived by a son and two daughters.

PERSONAL COLUMN

TICKETS FOR SALE: ALL ANARS, Birmingham, C. Robinson, 111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 265, 267, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 351, 353, 355, 357, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 369, 371, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 389, 391, 393, 395, 397, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407, 409, 411, 413, 415, 417, 419, 421, 423, 425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475, 477, 479, 481, 483, 485, 487, 489, 491, 493, 495, 497, 499, 501, 503, 505, 507, 509, 511, 513, 515, 517, 519, 521, 523, 525, 527, 529, 531, 533, 535, 537, 539, 541, 543, 545, 547, 549, 551, 553, 555, 557, 559, 561, 563, 565, 567, 569, 571, 573, 575, 577, 579, 581, 583, 585, 587, 589, 591, 593, 595, 597, 599, 601, 603, 605, 607, 609, 611, 613, 615, 617, 619, 621, 623, 625, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, 637, 639, 641, 643, 645, 647, 649, 651, 653, 655, 657, 659, 661, 663, 665, 667, 669, 671, 673, 675, 677, 679, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695, 697, 699, 701, 703, 705, 707, 709, 711, 713, 715, 717, 719, 721, 723, 725, 727, 729, 731, 733, 735, 737, 739, 741, 743, 745, 747, 749, 751, 753, 755, 757, 759, 761, 763, 765, 767, 769, 771, 773, 775, 777, 779, 781, 783, 785, 787, 789, 791, 793, 795, 797, 799, 801, 803, 805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 815, 817, 819, 821, 823, 825, 827, 829, 831, 833, 835, 837, 839, 841, 843, 845, 847, 849, 851, 853, 855, 857, 859, 861, 863, 865, 867, 869, 871, 873, 875, 877, 879, 881, 883, 885, 887, 889, 891, 893, 895, 897, 899, 901, 903, 905, 907, 909, 911, 913, 915, 917, 919, 921, 923, 925, 927, 929, 931, 933, 935, 937, 939, 941, 943, 945, 947, 949, 951, 953, 955, 957, 959, 961, 963, 965, 967, 969, 971, 973, 975, 977, 979, 981, 983, 985, 987, 989, 991, 993, 995, 997, 999, 1001, 1003, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1011, 1013, 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021, 1023, 1025, 1027, 1029, 1031, 1033, 1035, 1037, 1039, 1041, 1043, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1067, 1069, 1071, 1073, 1075, 1077, 1079, 1081, 1083, 1085, 1087, 1089, 1091, 1093, 1095, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1111, 1113, 1115, 1117, 1119, 1121, 1123, 1125, 1127, 1129, 1131, 1133, 1135, 1137, 1139, 1141, 1143, 1145, 1147, 1149, 1151, 1153, 1155, 1157, 1159, 1161, 1163, 1165, 1167, 1169, 1171, 1173, 1175, 1177, 1179, 1181, 1183, 1185, 1187, 1189, 1191, 1193, 1195, 1197, 1199, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1209, 1211, 1213, 1215, 1217, 1219, 1221, 1223, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1235, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1243, 1245, 1247, 1249, 1251, 1253, 1255, 1257, 1259, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1271, 1273, 1275, 1277, 1279, 1281, 1283, 1285, 1287, 1289, 1291, 1293, 1295, 1297, 1299, 1301, 1303, 1305, 1307, 1309, 1311, 1313, 1315, 1317, 1319, 1321, 1323, 1325, 1327, 1329, 1331, 1333, 1335, 1337, 1339, 1341, 1343, 1345, 1347, 1349, 1351, 1353, 1355, 1357, 1359, 1361, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1369, 1371, 1373, 1375, 1377, 1379, 1381, 1383, 1385, 1387, 1389, 1391, 1393, 1395, 1397, 1399, 1401, 1403, 1405, 1407, 1409, 1411, 1413, 1415, 1417, 1419, 1421, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1429, 1431, 1433, 1435, 1437, 1439, 1441, 1443, 1445, 1447, 1449, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1457, 1459, 1461, 1463, 1465, 1467, 1469, 1471, 1473, 1475, 1477, 1479, 1481, 1483, 1485, 1487, 1489, 1491, 1493, 1495, 1497, 1499, 1501, 1503, 1505, 1507, 1509, 1511, 1513, 1515, 1517, 1519, 1521, 1523, 1525, 1527, 1529, 1531, 1533, 1535, 1537, 1539, 1541, 1543, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1553, 1555, 1557, 1559, 1561, 1563, 1565, 1567, 1569, 1571, 1573, 1575, 1577, 1579, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1587, 1589, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1605, 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623, 1625, 1627, 1629, 1631, 1633, 1635, 1637, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1657, 1659, 1661, 1663, 1665, 1667, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1677, 1679, 1681, 1683, 1685, 1687, 1689, 1691, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1699, 1701, 1703, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1731, 1733, 1735, 1737, 1739, 1741, 1743, 1745, 1747, 1749, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025, 2027, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2035, 2037, 2039, 2041, 2043, 2045, 2047, 2049, 2051, 2053, 2055, 2057, 2059, 2061, 2063, 2065, 2067, 2069, 2071, 2073, 2075, 2077, 2079, 2081, 2083, 2085, 2087, 2089, 2091, 2093, 2095, 2097, 2099, 2101, 2103, 2105, 2107, 2109, 2111, 2113, 2115, 2117, 2119, 2121, 2123, 2125, 2127, 2129, 2131, 2133, 2135, 2137, 2139, 2141, 2143, 2145, 2147, 2149, 2151, 2153, 2155, 2157, 2159, 2161, 2163, 2165, 2167, 2169, 2171, 2173, 2175, 2177, 2179, 2181, 2183, 2185, 2187, 2189, 2191, 2193, 2195, 2197, 2199, 2201, 2203, 2205, 2207, 2209, 2211, 2213, 2215, 2217, 2219, 2221, 2223, 2225, 2227, 2229, 2231, 2233, 2235, 2237, 2239, 2241, 2243, 2245, 2247, 2249, 2251, 2253, 2255, 2257, 2259, 2261, 2263, 2265, 2267, 2269, 2271, 2273, 2275, 2277, 2279, 2281, 2283, 2285, 2287, 2289, 2291, 2293, 2295, 2297, 2299, 2301, 2303, 2305, 2307, 2309, 2311, 2313, 2315, 2317, 2319, 2321, 2323, 2325, 2327, 2329, 2331, 2333, 2335, 2337, 2339, 2341, 2343, 2345, 2347, 2349, 2351, 2353, 2355, 2357, 2359, 2361, 2363, 2365, 2367, 2369, 2371, 2373, 2375, 2377, 2379, 2381, 2383, 2385, 2387, 2389, 2391, 2393, 2395, 2397, 2399, 2401, 2403, 2405, 2407, 2409, 2411, 2413, 2415, 2417, 2419, 2421, 2423, 2425, 2427, 2429, 2431, 2433, 2435, 2437, 2439, 2441, 2443, 2445, 2447, 2449, 2451, 2453, 2455, 2457, 2459, 2461, 2463, 2465, 2467, 2469, 2471, 2473, 2475, 2477, 2479, 2481, 2483, 2485, 2487, 2489, 2491, 2493, 2495, 2497, 2499, 2501, 2503, 2505, 2507, 2509, 2511, 2513, 2515, 2517, 2519, 2521, 2523, 2525, 2527, 2529, 2531, 2533, 2535, 2537, 2539, 2541, 2543, 2545, 2547, 2549, 2551, 2553, 2555, 2557, 2559, 2561, 2563, 2565, 2567, 2569, 2571, 2573, 2575, 2577, 2579, 2581, 2583, 2585, 2587, 25

INSIDE SECTION
2
TODAY



ECONOMICS
Janet Bush says
Papal Bull has
upset the IMF
PAGE 29



ARTS
Duran Duran give
fans everything
but the girl
PAGES 35-37



HOMES
Plaques on listed
houses can
upset planners
PAGE 39

**TELEVISION
AND
RADIO
PAGES
46,47**

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9 1998

Pharmaceutical groups expected to announce merger today

Zeneca in £40bn Astra deal

By PAUL DURMAN

ZENECA, Britain's third-largest pharmaceutical company, is close to agreeing a £40 billion merger with Astra of Sweden, it emerged last night.

The company, formerly the drug and agrochemicals arm of ICI, said it was in talks that could lead to a possible combination of the two companies in a merger of equals transaction.

The announcement came after the close of London trading that had seen Zeneca's shares rise by 100p to £25.20, valuing the group at almost £24 billion.

Sir David Barnes, Zeneca's chief executive, looks a likely candidate to be chairman of the enlarged group.

Astra's Losec, an ulcer drug, is the world's largest selling medicine. But Losec's annual sales of more than \$3 billion (£1.8 billion) leave the Swedish

group badly exposed to the expected loss of its US patent protection at the end of 2001.

Zeneca also faces a problem because of the forthcoming expiry of the patent on Zestril, the heart drug that is its biggest seller.

Other important products include Zomig for migraine. The company is also well known for tamoxifen (Nolvadex), the breast cancer drug.

Mr Mogren has been unusually open about Astra's need to find a merger partner, and earlier this year cited Zeneca as one of three favoured partners, along with Schering-Plough and Bayer.

LucasVarity considers alternative route to US

By PAUL DURMAN

LUCASVARITY, which recently had plans to turn itself into an American company, is thought to be considering reverting to a US auto components manufacturer next year.

Such a plan would enable Victor Rice, the LucasVarity chief executive, to gain the US quote that he believes is necessary to take part in the consolidation of the industry.

York. Although a majority of shareholders voted in favour of the scheme last month, LucasVarity failed to secure the necessary 75 per cent support by less than 1 per cent.

Mr Rice and his board have embarked on an internal review to find ways of implementing their unanimously agreed strategy.

A second attempt to move the business to the US may anger shareholders who opposed the change of domicile.

Mr Rice may also risk further controversy because allowing LucasVarity to be acquired by an American group would trigger large "change-of-control" payments to him and to Tony Gilroy, chief operating officer, and Neil Arnold, finance director.

Mr Harrison is currently in prison in Germany having been arrested in July as part of an investigation into the collapse of Millennium Schube, the German company that he jointly owned with Mr Hinchliffe.

Mr Harrison issued a statement on behalf of Mr Hinchliffe, saying: "Mr Hinchliffe strenuously denies the allegations made against him and intends to resist the charges and to defend himself and demonstrate his innocence."



Stephen Hinchliffe denies charges of corruption and conspiracy to defraud

Hinchliffe charged with corruption

By JASON NISSE

STEPHEN HINCHLIFFE, whose Facia retailing empire collapsed in 1996, has been arrested and charged with corruption and conspiracy to defraud.

The controversial South Yorkshire businessman was arrested at his Sheffield home yesterday morning in a joint operation by South Yorkshire police and the Serious Fraud Office.

Mr Harrison was named as a co-conspirator in the charges brought yesterday but has not been charged himself.

Another PolyGram chief quits

JAN COOK, chief executive of PolyGram, yesterday became the fourth senior executive to leave the company within two weeks as the music and film group prepared to finalise its \$10.4 billion (£6.3 billion) merger with Canada's Seagram (Chris Ayres writes).

The group's third quarter results, released yesterday, showed a 26.4 per cent improvement in underlying pre-tax profits to £91 million, although group sales were only 3 per cent higher at £1.03 billion.

Prism puts out profits warning

PRISM RAIL yesterday blamed the Government's railways performance regime as it became the first privatised rail company to issue a profits warning (Fraser Nelson writes).

City confident of further rate cut from MPC

THE Bank of England begins its monthly monetary policy deliberations today with the City confident that the Bank will again cut rates when the meeting ends tomorrow.

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Divorced chief parts company with GE

By KIMBERLY McDONALD



GARY WENDT, the executive who built General Electric Capital Services but became infamous for his costly and highly publicised divorce, was pushed out as head of GE's financial arm yesterday.

former wife Lorna, was awarded about \$20 million, or half his net worth, after arguing that her role as a "corporate wife" had been crucial to his success.

Though rumours of Mr Wendt's imminent departure had been sweeping through financial markets for some time, it comes at a difficult time for GE.

Despite meeting analysts' earnings targets amid a shaky global economy, the company is currently mid-stream in an extensive restructuring process and faces Mr Wendt's retirement when he turns 65 in two years.

they tried to hammer a stake... assaulted by Mr Rush... upsert to talk after the hearing...

Davies seeks to calm City over FSA powers

By RICHARD MILES

HOWARD DAVIES, chairman of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), sought yesterday to soothe City fears about the wide range of enforcement powers that the watchdog will assume under new laws expected to reach the statute books in 2000.

Appearing before the influential Treasury Select Committee of MPs, Mr Davies attempted to offer reassurance on the accountability of the FSA,

and promised a speedy and low-cost appeals process for members who take issue with any disciplinary action.

Mr Davies said that full details of the FSA's approach to enforcement, including a guide to the intervention process, would be outlined in a consultative document due to be published next week. The financial services industry will be given up to three months to comment on its contents.

On appeals against disciplinary action — some City executives have

claimed the cost of an appeal is prohibitively high — Mr Davies was unable to say whether miscreants would have automatic right to a proposed independent tribunal under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

"Our own view is that for the most part we can comply with the United Nations Convention on Human Rights in our disciplinary processes. But on outstanding questions about the market abuse regime and the appeals process, [Treasury] ministers

will have to look at this. "A resolution cannot be found elsewhere, he added.

Phillip Thorpe, managing director and head of enforcement, said there would be "internal checks and balances" to ensure there was no collusion between enforcement staff and members. Also, the authorisation of an investigation would be separated from those carrying out the work.

Asked who was responsible for the £11 billion personal pensions mis-selling scandal, Mr Davies laid the blame squarely at the door of the industry.

He said: "The responsibility is with the firms and the salesforces who did not appreciate the implications of the regulatory environment."

The FSA, which embraces nine existing regulators including the supervisory arm of the Bank of England, will be placed on a statutory footing sometime in 2000 when the Financial Services and Markets Bill is expected to be enacted.

The Treasury Select Committee is expected to publish its report on the FSA in the spring.

Fairness at Work warning for CBI

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

PETER MANDELSON, the Trade and Industry Secretary, last night delivered a warning to employers that he intended to stick to the Fairness at Work White Paper.

He told the Confederation of British Industry bosses that the plans would not be watered down despite substantial lobbying from the employers' group. At a dinner for the CBI's London Region he said: "Whatever you may have heard, I am entirely committed to the essence of the proposals set out in Margaret Beckett's White Paper."

His pledge ends uncertainty over the industrial legislation following the Government's consideration of a new condition for union recognition — forcing members to prove a commitment by a minimum membership period.

Union sources believe that his speech to the CBI was in fact targeting Labour's group of trade union MPs who have been increasingly restive about changes to the Bill that is expected to be published after Christmas.

Mr Mandelson said: "I believe in trade unions... Trade unions protect the individual against arbitrary abuse of power at the workplace. They can be an effective channel of communication between employer and employee raising productivity and facilitating change."

The CBI is likely to take some comfort in powers given to the Central Arbitration Committee, which will oversee enforcement of the new laws.

A TUC spokesman said: "We welcome any clear message to the CBI that their efforts to water down the White Paper will not be successful."



Graham Roper, left, Berkeley chairman, and Tony Pidgley are confident of the long-term future but expect a challenging 1999

AT&T signs \$5bn data services deal with IBM

By KIMBERLY McDONALD

AT&T is to buy IBM's data networking business for \$5 billion (£3 billion) cash, filling an important gap in the company's ability to supply business customers with high-speed data services and Internet access.

Merger and acquisition consultants said the move signalled a new wave of corporate co-operation, as companies sought to streamline operations, focus on core businesses, and get a foothold on the Internet in order to stay competitive in a difficult business climate.

IBM's global network busi-

ness, with \$2.3 billion in revenue, has one million Internet users as well as tens of thousands of business customers around the world.

Michael Armstrong, chairman and chief executive of AT&T, said the acquisition would boost AT&T's strategy of rapidly increasing revenues at AT&T Solutions, its fast-growing networking services unit. He added that the agreement would add \$2.5 billion to AT&T's earnings in the first full year of operation.

Analysts said the acquisition put AT&T in the same league as MCI WorldCom, the

industry leader. However, AT&T's improved global Internet and data services platform didn't come cheap. The \$5 billion price tag was at least \$1 billion more than most analysts expected.

The deal also bolsters AT&T's joint venture with British Telecom, which involves the supply of communications services to business customers in 100 different countries.

Under the deal announced yesterday, 5,000 IBM employees from the global network division will work for AT&T when the deal closes. In a related move, IBM has agreed to

manage AT&T's computers that support its long-distance services for business customers for \$4 billion over ten years. As a result, more than 2,000 AT&T employees will be offered jobs at IBM.

In addition, AT&T will manage the communications needed by IBM for its business customers for \$5 billion over five years.

Analysts said the deal, which has been rumoured for months, would help AT&T reach its goal of becoming a dominant provider of communications that use Internet technology to transmit data.

Berkeley buys as prices of land fall

By ROBERT COLE
CITY CORRESPONDENT

BERKELEY GROUP, the housebuilder, said yesterday that the price of development land in London had slumped by 20 per cent since the summer.

Tony Pidgley, the chief executive, said that the falls had come as demand for London land from Far East speculators who had been forcing prices up had disappeared. Enthusiasm to acquire sites among smaller UK-based builders had also dried up because of the slowing economy and appetite for housebuying.

Mr Pidgley said that the company was using the decline in land prices as an opportunity to acquire sites. He said Berkeley had reined back its expenditure on land in the six months period ended on October 31 because prices were high. Berkeley acquired land in the six months to October 31 at one quarter of the rate of the year to April 30.

Pre-tax profits for the six months to October, reported yesterday, rose 19 per cent to £52.5 million.

The average price received for Berkeley houses sold in the half rose from £177,000 to £246,000 but this was because there were more bigger properties sold. Mr Pidgley said the underlying house price picture was flat.

He said that he was confident about Berkeley's long-term future and its current financial footing but added: "We expect the calendar year 1999 to be a more challenging one." Shares in the company fell 12p to 412p.

Tempus, page 28

Savers taking junk-bond path, says Aberdeen

By RICHARD MILES

PRIVATE investors are pouring money into high-yield corporate bonds, including junk-grade investments, in the pursuit of income, Aberdeen Asset Management claimed yesterday.

The fund manager said that sales of its corporate bond personal equity plan had risen to £246 million in the past 12 months, taking the fund's market value beyond £500 million.

Aberdeen, which last year acquired Profitic, the asset management business of Scot-

tish Provident, the insurer, said that it had also attracted £340 million to three investment trusts specialising in corporate bonds.

Martin Gilbert, chief executive, forecast that more investors would switch their money into high-yield bonds as interest rates are cut and yields on government bonds continue to fall. The long-term yield on gilts is now below 4.5 per cent.

However, Mr Gilbert added that it was becoming increasingly difficult to buy high-

yield corporate bonds in the capital markets after the international financial crisis in the summer. Aberdeen places about £3 million in the high-yield market each day.

Aberdeen said that year-end profits before tax and exceptional costs leapt to £13.6 million, from £5.9 million, reflecting the first-time inclusion of Profitic. Exceptional costs to cover the acquisition were £4.9 million. The total dividend, payable on January 20, rises by 20 per cent to 4.5p.

Abbey reveals details of board changes

By CHRIS AYRES

ABBEY NATIONAL, the banking group, said yesterday that Charles Toner will retire from the post of deputy chief executive after its annual meeting next April.

Detailing other changes to the board, Abbey said Martin Lloythar, deputy chairman, and Lord Rockley, a non-executive director, will retire on January 1.

Charles Villiers, chairman of First National Bank, will become deputy chairman responsible for Scottish Mutual. Keith Woodley also becomes joint deputy chairman.

Sema set to slip from FTSE 100

By CHRIS AYRES

SEMA, the Anglo-French information technology group, is expected to suffer the humiliation of being squeezed out of the FTSE 100 index today, after only three months.

Misys, the software group, is likely to suffer the same fate as Sema, leaving the index of Britain's 100 biggest companies without any IT groups at all.

Companies likely to be promoted in the quarterly reshuffle include Dixons, the electrical retailer, and the cigarette manufacturers Imperial Tobacco and Gallaher, the cash-

generative qualities of which have proved popular during the economic downturn.

Sema found itself catapulted into the FTSE 100 after a strong performance in the first half of this year, and at one point found its shares trading at 66 times future earnings.

However, the global financial crisis, disappointing results and City jitters surrounding the possibility of a large US acquisition, have seen its shares sink from 825p in July to 361p in October. The shares have since recovered to 520p.

If perfection on the palate exists, this is it.

Jim Murray's Complete Book of Whisky, 1997

Ardbeg is now available at Oddbins and other discerning specialists.

ON BALANCE, THE FINEST MALT IN THE WORLD

Cassidy quits at Newcastle

By CHRIS AYRES

DENIS CASSIDY resigned as chairman of Newcastle United yesterday after failing to stop Douglas Hall and Freddy Shepherd, the company's disgraced former directors, being re-elected to the quoted football club's main board.

His abrupt departure followed disputes over the company's management structure

and was accompanied by the departure of John Josephs and Tom Fenton as the company's non-executive directors, as well as the resignation of BT Alex Brown as its stockbroker.

Mr Hall and Mr Shepherd resigned from Newcastle earlier this year after a Sunday newspaper printed embarrassing remarks they had made

about fans, players and local women.

Mr Hall and Mr Shepherd control about 65 per cent of Newcastle's shares and it is thought their return was hastened by their belief that they needed to be in control of the company at a time when many football clubs are receiving bids from media companies.

Both men have been locked in to their shareholdings for the last two years since Newcastle's flotation.

Of the reappointments, Les Wheatley, Newcastle's finance director, said: "It was not the most popular decision we ever made." He added that the return of Newcastle's two biggest shareholders was "inevitable".

Plasmon acquires Dutch firm for £16m

PLASMON, the computer disk company, is moving into the manufacture of disk and tape drives through the £16 million acquisition of Philips LMS, part of the Dutch electronics group. Having suffered heavy losses last year because of the collapse in prices of recordable compact discs, Plasmon is concentrating on systems used to store massive amounts of data.

Philips LMS, which has 45 employees in Blackburn and another 130 at Colorado Springs in the US, makes the drives and media for the 12-inch optical disks used by patent registries and other large libraries.

Nigel Street, Plasmon's chief executive, said the deal gives the group a bigger presence in the tape market. Plasmon is funding the acquisition with £10 million from a placing and a three-for-eight open offer of shares at 68p. It will pay Philips an initial \$18.5 million (£11.2 million) with the balance payable over two years. In the nine months to September 25, Philips LMS made an operating profit of \$7.3 million on sales of \$32.1 million. Plasmon returned to profit in its first half, making £170,000 (£8.2 million loss) on sales that were 48 per cent higher at £20.9 million. There is no interim dividend.

Improvement at Heinz

HJ HEINZ, the company behind Heinz ketchup and Weight Watchers products, reported a rise in second quarter net income to \$20.2 million (£13.5 million) from \$20.3 million. Revenues rose to \$2.32 billion from \$2.26 billion. The company said the results reflected growth in a number of product lines, including ketchup, Weight Watchers, soups and seafood, but it also vowed to boost performance of its frozen potato and pet food product lines. Heinz expects full-year earnings per share to rise by between 10 and 12 per cent.

German buy for Ascot

ASCOT, the UK industrial company, is buying Haltermann Group in Germany for £90 million in cash and shares, creating the world's largest independent chemicals contract processor. Haltermann, which has been wholly owned by the founding family for 100 years, provides custom processing services including distillation and refining for the chemical and petrochemical industries. It employs some 480 people. In 1997 Haltermann earned pre-tax profits of £9.4 million on turnover of £130.3 million.

Avis board shake-up

ALUN CATHCART is to relinquish executive duties at Avis Europe, the car rental group, it was announced yesterday. Mr Cathcart, the chairman and chief executive, will become non-executive chairman, with Mark McCafferty, group managing director, becoming chief executive. Avis also announced the resignation of David Maloney, the finance director, who will be corporate development director until he leaves the company next September. He is succeeded as finance director by Chris Cowan, formerly finance director of Jardine Matheson Holdings in Hong Kong.

Stena to shed 800 jobs

STENA LINE, the shipping group that operates cross-Channel ferries in a joint venture with P&O, yesterday announced the loss of 800 jobs because of the end next year of duty-free shopping between European Union countries. Stena said it would be cutting 650 staff on its services from Gothenburg in Sweden to Kiel, Germany and FrederiksHAVN, Denmark. A further 150 staff based in Gothenburg will also be lost. Bo Somner, chief executive, said: "This follows measures taken to improve profitability for operations without tax-free sales."

Ultraframe confident

ULTRAFRAME, a maker of bespoke conservatory roofs, said that it did not expect the UK economic slowdown to put a brake on its sales growth. Ian Robinson, managing director of the company that floated last year, said: "There's a lot of pent-up demand." For the 53 weeks to October 30, pre-tax profit was £8.5 million, 44.5 per cent higher than the figure for 52-week period to September 26, 1997. Earnings per share were up to 13.5p from 9.5p and turnover was £61.6 million (£53.6 million). The final dividend is 3.7p for a total 5.4p.

Topps acquisition

TOPPS TILES, the ceramic tiles retailer, is paying £1 million to acquire 20 retail sites from the receiver to the business formerly trading as Tile City under a deal agreed earlier this week. The purchase price was disclosed yesterday after the publicity of certain confidentiality agreements. Topps did not publish financial results this week, as it incorrectly stated in the Times Business News yesterday. In August it announced a 64 per cent rise in annual pre-tax profits to £4.1 million.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|------|------|-----------------|--------|
| Australia \$ | 2.77 | Bank | 2.77 | Japan Yen | 214.7 |
| Austria Sch | 20.48 | Bank | 2.77 | Mex | 6.89 |
| Belgium F | 20.28 | Bank | 2.77 | Netherlands Gld | 3.21 |
| Canada \$ | 2.07 | Bank | 2.77 | New Zealand \$ | 1.22 |
| Dynis Cop £ | 0.9840 | Bank | 2.77 | Norway Kr | 11.03 |
| Dmark M | 11.11 | Bank | 2.77 | Portugal Esc | 206.22 |
| Spain Ptas | 5.83 | Bank | 2.77 | S Africa Rd | 18.87 |
| France F | 6.96 | Bank | 2.77 | Spain Ptas | 246.89 |
| Germany Dm | 2.50 | Bank | 2.77 | Sweden Kr | 14.22 |
| Hong Kong \$ | 4.90 | Bank | 2.77 | Switzerland Fr | 2.14 |
| Ireland Ird | 2.34 | Bank | 2.77 | Taiwan NTD | 19.36 |
| Italy Lira | 1.936 | Bank | 2.77 | Turkey Lira | 5732.6 |
| Japan Yen | 1.095 | Bank | 2.77 | USA \$ | 1.76 |
| Korea Won | 1.095 | Bank | 2.77 | | |
| UK £ | 1.000 | Bank | 2.77 | | |
| USA \$ | 1.000 | Bank | 2.77 | | |
| | | Bank | 2.77 | | |

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Zeneca finds love in the stars

Since David Barnes cannot be accused of undue haste in his decision to join in the current hectic round of mergers, he has been pondering the attractions of Astra for at least four years. Yesterday's announcement that the two are to become one was greeted with the same sense of relief that reverberates round villages or offices when a couple, obviously destined for each other, are united by the bowing to the inevitable.

Perhaps Astra's Haken Mogren succeeded in concentrating Sir David's mind on marriage when, earlier this year, he indicated that there were a couple of other potential suitors with whom he could imagine a future. The pharmaceutical vil-lagers always suspected that this was merely a ploy and that Zeneca was his true love.

Their long acquaintanceship should ensure that the coming-together is not marred by the messy differences that split Glaxo and SmithKline Beecham before the last of the bans had been called. The cultures are essentially compatible and the top management structure will have been sorted out, with the likelihood being that Sir David will emerge as chairman.

Zeneca goes into the deal from a position of enormous strength. When Sir Denis Henderson, as chairman of ICI, decided to fend off Lord Hanson's attack with a pre-emptive demerger of his own, he could not have envisaged that the newly christened

Zeneca would overtake its parent at such pace. Last night, ICI was valued at just £4 billion while Zeneca hit £24 billion.

Astra is not far from being an equal and we can expect today to hear how together they will be able to find the savings that make them far more profitable together than apart. Ironically, ICI is now looking at the possibility of buying back some of the speciality chemicals businesses that are now out of place in the streamlined Zeneca package. Putting those operations up for sale was part of Sir David's final preparations for the Astra deal.

Back at Millbank, Charles Miller Smith has been struggling to turn old ICI into sleek new ICI and found that chemical companies are much harder to reshape than Labour parties and politicians.

But the former Unilever man is doggedly sticking to his task and, slowly, making progress. The massive petrochemical plants in the North East will soon be less representative of the business than the high-tech factories that produce flavourings and colourings. Mr Miller Smith has bought from Unilever the companies that he knew well from his days there. He can now twitch his nose and detect the top

three notes in a new perfume. In old ICI, the last thing anyone wanted to do was lift their nose and have a sniff.

When Zeneca was demerged, there was a squabble over whether the speciality chemicals businesses should go or stay with ICI. They went on condition that ICI had first refusal to buy them back. It would be a neat end to the saga if that deal were quickly accomplished.

Compelling battle over pensions

R ight up to the last possible moment, it seems, the Department of Social Security and the Treasury have been warring over fundamental principles of the stakeholder pension plan that they are scheduled to unveil next week. The key battleground is whether the scheme should be compulsory for all.

The DSS insists that it must be. If the scheme is to have much

COMMENTARY

by our City Editor



purpose, its proponents argue, it must cover those who are currently unprovided and make sure that they too will be able to retire without a means-tested benefit prop. This is a basic principle for new Labour's new welfare state.

The Treasury is happy to force people to do things, but its corporate memory smells rats. Compulsion will make the plan sound like an extra tax. People of modest means may not take kindly to being told to put a tenth of their income into shares that typically rise or fall by 1 per cent a day.

Even worse, the universal principle seems to imply that the State would have to pay contributions for those who cannot afford to do so themselves. This is just the kind of open-ended commitment that makes red lights flash on officials' desks all over the Treasury.

When the Tories deregulated rents, housing benefit was offered as a long-stop for those hardest hit. It now costs £13 billion a

year. No wonder officials ask why means-tested contributions now are better than means-tested benefits in 40 years' time.

As ever, compromises could be made. Stakeholder pensions could be made compulsory only for full-time employees. But that would vastly widen the poverty trap and undermine all the Government's efforts to help — or push — people from welfare into work.

Alternatively, the rate of contribution could be cut right back from the 10 per cent that was widely regarded as the minimum to do the job, even before Gordon Brown cut pension fund investment returns. But in that case, the Government would suffer the backlash from compulsion without achieving its goal of a reasonable level of provision.

The bravest outcome now would be for the Cabinet to refer the scheme back for a rethink instead of rubber stamping the rush to cobble together something to meet the self-imposed

pre-Christmas deadline. A stakeholder pension could be allowed to grow out of the corpse of the old unfunded state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps). Ministers do not seem to have the nerve to abolish the unloved Serps but might allow it to just wither away.

Long on courage, short on sense

Clare Short, the Secretary for International Development, has never ducked controversy. Within hours of making headlines for her refusal to lobby on behalf of British business when on overseas trips, she kept an appointment to address the Export Times-Exporter of the Year awards dinner.

Pressing new engagements or diplomatic illnesses are not Ms Short's style and her feisty determination to put her case won her a degree of admiration in the exporters' den. But it was her courage rather than her common sense which won the applause. It may strike her as noble to insist that there should not be the slightest hint of a link between trade and aid but those who are fighting to win business for Britain tend to take a differ-

ent view. Ms Short made much of the Pergau dam affair and no one would suggest that such embarrassments should be avoided in the future. Aid given simply for trade does not constitute aid at all. But where genuine aid is being given, and some of it will be used to buy goods and services, is it unreasonable to hope that Britain might be able to provide those goods and services as well as any other country? In which case, what harm is there in a member of the British Government mentioning the fact?

Ms Short should not be ashamed to exhibit a shot of patriotism. While she struggles with her conscience, you can be sure that her peers from France and Germany will be lobbying hard for their home teams.

To the Victor

WHEN Victor Rice was defeated in his efforts to move Lucas-Variety's headquarters to the United States, he headed straight back to his US home. Men like that do not get sulky, they get even. If he can find an American suitor for the company, he will have neatly dealt with the minority of shareholders who blocked his plans. Whether the new owner would wish to retain the expensive services of Mr Rice is another matter. But his contract will ensure that a take-over provides him with gilded parachutes from which to thumb his nose at his opponents.

S&N restrained by poor summer trading

By DOMINIC WALSH

SCOTTISH & NEWCASTLE, the brewing and pub company, yesterday unveiled a 4.5 per cent decline in first-half profits as the poor summer weather and the uncertain economic climate combined to restrain consumer spending.

Pre-tax profits in the 26 weeks to November 1 dipped from £224.5 million to £214.5 million from turnover down from £1.68 billion to £1.66 billion.

However, the shares responded with a gain of 15½p to 719½p on positive comments from the company.

Sir Alistair Grant, chairman, said: "Our continuing objective is to outperform our competitors and it is satisfying to report that the company has

made significant progress in each division."

Although fully diluted earnings per share dipped to 26.6p (27.9p), the company said it was raising the interim dividend by 7.6 per cent to 8.53p (7.93p) to reflect its "confidence in the underlying progress of the group."

As a result of its caution on consumer spending, S&N is to peg its capital expenditure programme at around £350 million over the next 18 months. In its retail division, where operating profits rose 12.6 per cent to £114.7 million, the focus will continue to be its John Barras and WJSJ Sandersons community pubs with a more cautious approach to the high street.

However, Brian Stewart, chief executive, described the move as "a touch on the brake" rather than a foot on the brake and the group was still seeing returns on investment of 17 per cent. Although like-for-like sales declined by 2.5 per cent, a tight grip on costs had allowed the division to move forwards.

Its brewing division, Scottish Courage, saw a 9.9 per cent decline to £104.3 million, largely as a result of the loss of an exclusive supply contract with Nomura's Grand Pub Company. The stars were Foster's and Kronenbourg, where volumes were up 10 per cent, and Miller Pilsner, which was up 22 per cent. Total beer volumes declined in line with the

market by about 3 per cent, although John Smith's, the UK's biggest-selling bitter, was up 2 per cent in a market down 8 per cent.

In its leisure division, the investment needed to upgrade its continental Centre Parc holiday parks continues to impinge on the bottom line, with profits down 3.4 per cent to £31 million. Mr Stewart admitted: "It's heading in the right direction but we know we've got to deliver." Profits from Pontins dipped from £3.3 million to £1.3 million due to the summer weather, and Mr Stewart conceded that a sale of the business was "a possibility but it's a priority".

Tempus, page 28
City Diary, page 29

London Clubs beats forecasts

By DOMINIC WALSH



Alan Goodenough said doom and gloom had been expected

INVESTORS in London Clubs International, whose shares have more than halved in value in the past year, were in the money yesterday as the casino operator beat half-year profit forecasts.

The shares gained 17½p to 152½ — a rise of more than 10 per cent — despite a decline in pre-tax profits from £13.5 million to £9.7 million, about £1 million better than forecast.

Ignoring the £4 million cost of the recent rise in gaming duty, profits were just ahead of last year. Alan Goodenough, chief executive, said: "People were expecting us to come out with doom, gloom and despondency. Whilst the changes to gaming duty have had a material impact, underlying trading during the period was satisfactory." Turnover fell from £85.7 million to £79.7 million, largely be-

cause of the sale of the Carlton casino in Cannes. However, while the London market as a whole declined about 10 per cent, Mr Goodenough claimed that London Clubs was "slightly up", indicating a gain in market share. A drop-off in Far Eastern high-rollers had been offset by Middle Eastern customers.

Mr Goodenough said the move from the Ritz Club to the new 50 St James premises in July was working well after a slow start.

The group has taken the first steps towards expanding outside London to take advantage of the forthcoming gaming deregulation measures. It has applied for licences in Luton, Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham.

Earnings per share in the half year to September 27 declined to 4.2p (6.8p); the interim dividend remains at 2.625p

BTP profits slip 9% despite new strategy

By PAUL DURMAN

BTP, the chemical company which is now concentrating on supplying the pharmaceutical industry, has failed to reap the rewards from its strategic change, reporting a fall in profits so far this year of 9 per cent.

The company blamed weak demand for agrochemical intermediates, strong currencies and the economic problems in Asia for underlying pre-tax profits for the six months to the end of September which dropped to £29 million.

The results prompted some analysts to trim their profit forecasts. Martin Evans at Sutherlands, the stockbrokers,

presented its full-year forecast from £55 million to £52 million.

Through the acquisitions of Hexachimie in France for £55 million and Archimica in Italy for £100 million, and the disposal of its safety harness company in October, BTP now does more than 60 per cent of its business with the pharmaceutical industry.

With a strategy of targeting better-margin businesses plus the potential to grow as drugs companies contract out their own manufacturing, John Kettleby, chairman, described this as "one of the most exciting opportunities ever to

present itself in fine and specialty chemicals".

The Hexachimie and Archimica acquisitions contributed £4.8 million of the £26.1 million of operating profits.

The problems in agrochemicals produced a £6 million fall in profits at Nipa Hardwick. BTP, which makes an ingredient for the impotence drug Viagra, expects to benefit from several product launches next year.

The interim dividend, to be paid as a tax-saving foreign income dividend, rises by 3.1 per cent to 4.33p a share.

Tempus, page 28

Brewin still on look-out to buy

By RICHARD MILES

BREWIN DOLPHIN, the stockbroking firm, remains on the look-out for fresh acquisitions after its £24 million takeover of Wise Speke earlier this year, the company intimated yesterday.

However, John Hall, managing director, said that the difficulty with acquisitions was that they rarely occur when the buyer wants them. "It is largely a matter of who is available," he said.

Mr Hall said that Brewin had not built up a war chest for acquisitions, and would have to seek the funding from shareholders, although he emphasised that no deal was on the horizon.

Staff and management own 36 per cent of the company, and Amvescap, the fund manager, holds 14.8 per cent through its funds. Pre-tax profits for the nine months to September 30 — the firm has brought forward its year end — jumped 54 per cent, to £8.3 million, reflecting the inclusion of figures from Wise Speke. Brewin said that it had already achieved cost savings of £1 million from the deal.

Brewin said that it would not pay a dividend because of the shortening of the financial year to nine months. The company said that it intended to pay an interim dividend of not less than 7p in April.

Rain sees Hozelock fall

By MANUS COSTELLO

HOZELOCK, the garden equipment manufacturer, yesterday blamed the wettest April and June this century for a second successive year of declining profits.

"It was not a good season for gardening," said David Coddling, the chief executive.

"With half of our business coming from watering equipment, the exceptionally high rainfall was bound to affect business."

To counter the impact of the unpredictable British weather, the group is looking as far afield as Australia for acquisitions in an attempt to expand international operations.

Pre-tax profits for the year to September 26 were £4.7 million, down from last year's £7.1 million, with sales boosted to £53.9 million (£52.6 million) by the integration of Cyprus, the aquatics specialists.

The company said it lost about £1 million in profits because of the strength of the pound.

Earnings per share fell to 14.2p (20.1p).

An unchanged final dividend of 7.9p maintains the total for the year at 11.3p. The shares, which peaked at 53p in 1996, were unchanged at 23½p yesterday.



Coddling: not a good season

GTS to merge with Esprit

By CHRIS AYRES

THE growing demand for sophisticated Internet services led to another big deal in the telecoms industry yesterday when Global TeleSystems unveiled plans for a \$4.1 billion (£2.5 billion) merger with Esprit Telecom.

The all-paper deal, which could see the merged company

listed on the London Stock Exchange, will produce an organisation with 3,000 employees, 35,000 business customers in Western Europe, and a 9,200 kilometre high-capacity network. Both companies are currently listed on the Nasdaq and Easdaq stock exchanges. Holders of 65 per cent of the

voting shares of Esprit have already agreed to the deal. In the merger, GTS, in which the currency speculator George Soros has a large shareholding, will exchange 0.89 of its own shares for every Esprit American depositary share (ADS). The deal is based on GTS's closing price of \$41.75 on December 7, leav-

ing Esprit's ADS's valued at \$37.16. This represents a 22.8 per cent premium on its closing price on December 7.

In a statement, the companies said: "The boards of GTS and Esprit believe their businesses are complementary and that a range of benefits will arise from combining them."

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|------|--------------------------------|-----------|
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| 2 | IBM | US |
| 3 | Hewlett Packard | US |
| 4 | Matsushita Electric Industrial | Japan |
| 5= | BT | UK |
| 5= | Emerson Electric | US |
| 5= | Ericsson | Sweden |
| 8 | Microsoft | US |

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STOCK MARKET MICHAEL CLARK

Grade silent as First Leisure keeps rising

MICHAEL GRADE, the former boss of Channel 4, could never be described as a shrinking violet, so this week's vow of silence has puzzled the City.

It had been hoped that the chief executive of First Leisure would want to say something about the meteoric rise in its share price during the past couple of days. It might have been assumed that the London Stock Exchange would have applied pressure to the nightclub owner to shed some light on what has been going on.

Yesterday the price of First Leisure rose a further 8 1/2p, or 3.77 per cent, to 234p. That stretches the rise, so far, this week, to 30 1/2p, or 14.58 per cent, but still no comment has been forthcoming.

Weekend reports claimed that brewers Whitbread, up 24p at 763p, and Scottish & Newcastle, 15 1/2p firmer, at 719 1/2p after results, wanted to bid. But brokers who follow the leisure sector remain sceptical about such a move.

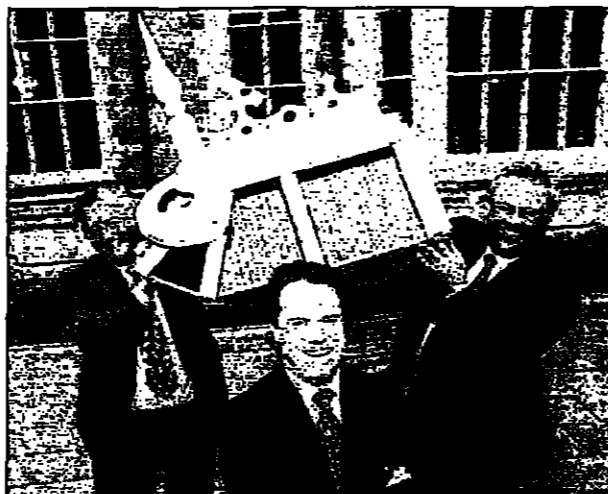
Fresh optimism about interest rates enabled the rest of the equity market to climb back above the 5,600 level, although prices still closed way below their best levels of the day. The FTSE 100 index was squeezed higher in thin trading and, after touching 5,639.8, closed 39.0 up at 5,615.7. Total turnover was again on the low side with 855 million shares changing hands.

Investors are convinced that the Monetary Policy Committee will not only cut rates tomorrow but will reduce them significantly. Their expectations were fuelled by the latest gloomy survey on retail sales from the British Retail Consortium.

Strange goings-on were recorded at Zeneca, up 100p at £25.20, where the price underwent strong gyrations ahead of the news that it had entered talks which could lead to a merger with rival Astra of Sweden.

One investor bought 235 shares at 9.06am paying £24.20. This was followed by a buyer of 800 shares at £26.25 and another buyer of 600 shares at £24.20. All that was achieved in the space of just a minute on the Stock Exchange's computerised trading system, SETS.

Somewhat pessimistic comments from Lehman Brothers ahead of final results tomorrow failed to benefit Compass Group, up 1/2p to 615p. Lehman is forecasting earnings growth this



James Henry, finance director of Ultraframe, flanked by Ian Robinson, left, and Don Greenhalgh, saw shares rise

year of 10 per cent to 17.3p with margins up across the board in the second six months. It rates the shares "outperform".

PizzaExpress was left nursing a fall of 3 1/2p at 812 1/2p after a bout of share-selling by directors. Six of its nine directors have sold a total of 1.15 million shares, or 1.17 per cent, during the past few days at an average price of 837p. The shares were

sold after being converted from deferred shares last week at the 450p level, netting a profit of 64.5 million.

Reed International retreated 9 1/2p to 433p after Credit Suisse First Boston, the broker, cut its profit forecasts for Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing owned joint by Elsevier and Reed International, over the next two years by 7 per

cent. It is now looking for £770 million in 1999 and £800 million in 2000.

Over on AIM, shares of Chorion continued to power ahead, finishing 2 1/2p better at 214p. The group is split into two divisions. The first operates bars and nightclubs, the other controls the intellectual rights for Enid Blyton, including a highly successful television series of Noddy in the US.

Record profits and a maiden dividend of 5.4p at Ultraframe, where Ian Robinson is managing director, were rewarded with a rise of 13p to 227 1/2p. The designer and manufacturer of conservatory roofing hoisted pre-tax profits last year by 44.5 per cent to £18.5 million. Don Greenhalgh, chairman, is bullish about prospects for the current year and is looking to expand overseas.

Buying in a thin market continued to drive A.M.N. Holdings higher with a leap of 10 1/2p to £11.95. Brokers say the launch of Sony's new PlayStation, where its components are used, will boost turnover by 80 per cent next year.

Hewlett rose 6p to 150p ahead of the news that it had received an approach that could lead to a recommended offer being made for the building materials group.

A gloomy trading update sent Orbis 3 1/2p lower to 30 1/2p, while profit warnings left Prisma Rail 5 1/2p down at 35 1/2p and VHE Holdings 5p at 32 1/2p.

CGILL-EDGED: Calls for a cut of at least 1 per cent in interest rates will see the Bank of England votes tomorrow brought a fresh lease of life to the London bond market.

Early support focused on shorter-dated issues although best gains were not always held. Prices at the longer end closed with gains stretching to almost £1. Sentiment was further helped by the latest survey from the BRC.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt advanced 36p to £117.86 as a total of 20,000 contracts were completed. Among conventional issues, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 finished 9 1/2p dearer at £148.07, while at the shorter end Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was 7p firmer at £107.29.

FTSE 100: Shares in general struggled in morning trade although technology issues rallied. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 2.32 down at 9,068.15.

FTSE 100: 5,615.7 (+39.0) | FTSE 250: 4,215.5 (+15.8) | FTSE SmallCap: 3,812.8 (+12.2) | FTSE All-Share (rebased): 3,812.8 (+12.2) | FTSE 100 Retailers (general price index): 117.2 (+0.3) | FTSE 100: 5,615.7 (+39.0) | FTSE 250: 4,215.5 (+15.8) | FTSE SmallCap: 3,812.8 (+12.2) | FTSE All-Share (rebased): 3,812.8 (+12.2) | FTSE 100 Retailers (general price index): 117.2 (+0.3)

NEW YORK (midday):

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Dow Jones | 9068.15 (-2.32) |
| S&P Composite | 1188.88 (+2.16) |
| Nikkei Average | 14608.20 (+84.71) |
| Tokyo | |
| Hang Seng | 10361.08 (-77.79) |
| Amsterdam | |
| ASE index | 1078.55 (+4.74) |
| Sydney | |
| ASX | 2717.1 (+15.8) |
| Frankfurt | |
| DAX | 4808.24 (-14.62) |
| Singapore | |
| SGX | 1363.61 (+16.78) |
| Brussels | |
| EBEX | 352.79 (+13.84) |
| Paris | |
| CAC-40 | 3765.41 (-5.81) |
| Zurich | |
| SIX | 1304.60 (-12.90) |
| London | |
| FTSE 100 | 5615.7 (+39.0) |
| FTSE 250 | 4215.5 (+15.8) |
| FTSE SmallCap | 3812.8 (+12.2) |
| FTSE All-Share (rebased) | 3812.8 (+12.2) |
| FTSE 100 Retailers | 117.2 (+0.3) |
| FTSE 100: 5615.7 (+39.0) FTSE 250: 4215.5 (+15.8) FTSE SmallCap: 3812.8 (+12.2) FTSE All-Share (rebased): 3812.8 (+12.2) FTSE 100 Retailers: 117.2 (+0.3) | |

A little local difficulty

IN THE last recession, the brewing sector was frequently proffered as a defensive play. In an otherwise uncertain world, the theory went, people would continue to drink and would be loath to give up their pilsner down at the local. With an economic slowdown upon us once again, the same theory is doing the rounds. Scottish & Newcastle should be the main beneficiary after the move by its rivals Bass and Whitbread into more hazardous leisure and hotel activities.

However, what this theory ignores is the way the landscape has changed. Back in the dark days of the last recession, the pound was weak, restrictions on imports of cheap foreign beer were much stronger and the big brewers benefited from having huge tied estates.

That S&N is already suffering from the slowdown in consumer spending was appar-

ent in yesterday's interim results. Although its top larger brands, such as Foster's and Kronenbourg, saw double-digit volume growth, total volumes declined.

And although S&N continues to extract returns from its managed pubs well ahead of the cost of capital, the six months showed those returns slipping from 22 per cent to 17 per cent. Meanwhile, Center Parc continues to struggle to impress at the bottom line because of the cost of upgrading and marketing the indoor holiday destinations.

Some believe that S&N has begun to lose its way strategically and needs to invest to secure future growth. Although its shares - up 15 1/2p to 719 1/2p - are still well short of the 945p they reached in the spring, they are no more than a hold until the longer-term strategy becomes a little clearer.

Berkeley Group

HOUSEBUILDING is on a roll, and Berkeley Group, once a stock market favourite, has been clouded more than most. It is not hard to see why, but it is worth asking whether the fall from grace is justified.

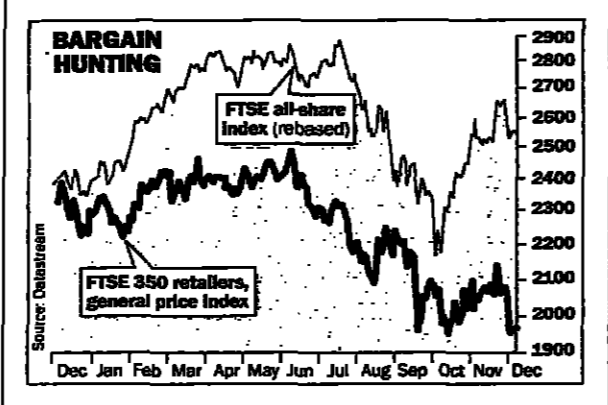
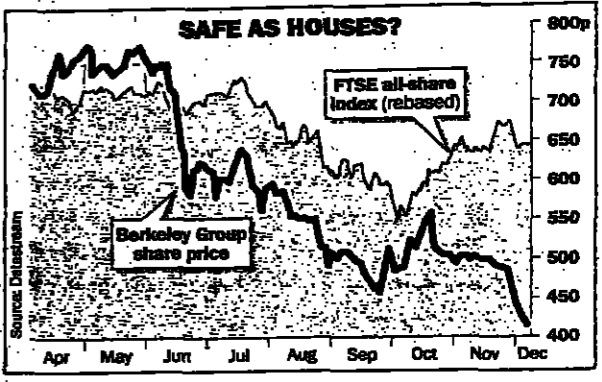
Berkeley is disliked because its operations are weighted towards the South East, and that is where the economic strife is meant to be hitting hardest. Some of Berkeley's key ratios are moving in the wrong direction too, return on capital employed and profit margins are edging down, and operating cash-flow is negative.

There is some nervousness about management, too. Tony Pidgley, founder and chief executive, has a good reputation for judging the market, but there is a reasonable fear that he is not infail-

ible and may not have all the support that he requires.

The ground is not about to open and swallow Berkeley, however. It is healthily profitable, ungeared and looking for growth. Like all housebuilders, it is in a market where, over the cycle, demand will stay strong. Pidgley's judgment will not dissolve overnight either. For customers,

interest rates are low and average house prices relate reasonably to average earnings. The shares are at a three-year low of 412p, equivalent to seven times forecast earnings per share. They are cheap and should be bought, but it may take time for sentiment to swing back behind housebuilders generally, and Berkeley in particular.



JUST 16 shopping days left to Christmas and there is little prospect of it being a merry one for Britain's retailers. A survey from the British Retail Consortium showed a 0.4 per cent drop in sales during November, compared with the same time last year.

The only area of encouragement focused on mail-order which was behind a rise of 28p to 605p in Great Universal Stores.

But judging by last week's profits warning from Arcadia, down 6 1/2p at 175p, trading conditions have deteriorated dramatically. Only five weeks previously the clothing retailer had said it was on target.

A further insight into how consumer demand is holding up will be revealed later today when Kingfisher, 19p dearer at 545p, issues a trading update.

Word is that business has been brisk for the Woolworths and B&Q retailer, HSBC Securities, the broker, and rival Société Générale Securities are both upbeat about prospects.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
| 2nd St Divs Equity Units | 179 | + 2 1/2 |
| Artisan (UK) | 5 1/2 | ... |
| Charlton | 117 1/2 | ... |
| Highgate Assets Trust | 117 1/2 | ... |
| Connaught | 149 1/2 | ... |
| First Active | 282 1/2 | + 2 1/2 |
| Five Arrows US Div Ln 2040 | 119 1/2 | ... |
| Garhan | 231 1/2 | - 1 |
| MPII Sess Zeno Div Pl | 52 | ... |
| Monthly High Inc Guaranteed | 50 1/2 | ... |
| Natl Bldg Mils Cv Pl | 105 | ... |
| Natural Building Mils | 5 | - 1/2 |
| Offshore Tool & Energy | 18 1/2 | ... |
| Pizzacchi Growth Ts | 95 | + 2 1/2 |
| Plym Res | 94 | ... |
| Singer & Fnd Alk VCT | 100 | ... |
| Thistle Hotels Pl | 15 | ... |
| Xenova Warrants | 13 1/2 | ... |
| LP (p) 7 | 1 1/4 | - 1 |
| PPI Therapeutics (p) (50) | 19 | - 1 |

| RISKS: | Close | Chng | Chng% |
|----------------|---------|----------|---------|
| London Clubs | 156 | + 2 | + 1.5 |
| Zeneca | 285 | + 27 1/2 | + 10.2 |
| Euro Halshaw | 230 | + 18 1/2 | + 8.1 |
| Arcadia | 365 | + 23 | + 6.3 |
| Ultraframe | 227 1/2 | + 13 | + 5.8 |
| Yule Celco | 278 1/2 | + 15 | + 5.6 |
| Powderjett | 538 1/2 | + 27 1/2 | + 5.1 |
| SAI Telecom | 340 | + 13 | + 3.8 |
| GUS | 605 | + 28 1/2 | + 4.8 |
| Paton | 465 | + 21 1/2 | + 4.6 |
| Shell | 748 1/2 | + 31 1/2 | + 4.3 |
| Imperial | 349 1/2 | + 14 1/2 | + 4.1 |
| FALLS: | Close | Chng | Chng% |
| Stock Account | 1 | - 1 | - 100.0 |
| SMP | 1 | - 1 | - 100.0 |
| Soda Petroleum | 10 1/2 | - 2 | - 19.0 |
| Bougenville | 7 1/2 | - 1/2 | - 7.5 |
| Jan 99 | 64.98 | - 0.58 | - 0.9 |
| Emerald Energy | 3 1/2 | - 1/2 | - 15.0 |
| McBride | 10 1/2 | - 1 | - 9.5 |
| Sterling Pub | 10 1/2 | - 1 | - 9.5 |
| Avoca | 17 1/2 | - 2 1/2 | - 14.3 |

COMMODITIES

| LIFFE | | |
|----------------|---------|---|
| COCOA | 1180.00 | + |
| ROBUSTA COFFEE | 163.20 | + |
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| POURNOI | 103.00 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |
| ROBUSTA COFFEE | 163.20 | + |
| COCOA | 1180.00 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |

COMMODITIES

| LONDON METAL EXCHANGE | | |
|-----------------------|---------|--------|
| Copper (3 months) | 1425.00 | -10.00 |
| Aluminium (3 months) | 1875.00 | -10.00 |
| Zinc (3 months) | 1005.00 | -5.00 |
| Nickel (3 months) | 100.00 | -2.00 |
| Lead (3 months) | 2100.00 | -10.00 |
| Gold (3 months) | 385.00 | -0.50 |
| Silver (3 months) | 21.50 | -0.10 |
| Platinum (3 months) | 1850.00 | -10.00 |
| Rhodium (3 months) | 1200.00 | -10.00 |

| LIFFE POTATO (p/c) | | |
|--------------------|--------|---|
| Jan | 142.00 | + |
| Feb | 142.00 | + |
| Mar | 142.00 | + |
| Apr | 142.00 | + |
| May | 142.00 | + |
| Jun | 142.00 | + |
| Jul | 142.00 | + |
| Aug | 142.00 | + |
| Sep | 142.00 | + |
| Oct | 142.00 | + |
| Nov | 142.00 | + |
| Dec | 142.00 | + |

| LONDON METAL EXCHANGE | | |
|-----------------------|----------|---------|
| Lead (3 months) | 2100.00 | -10.00 |
| Tin (3 months) | 15000.00 | -100.00 |
| Iron (3 months) | 1500.00 | -10.00 |
| Steel (3 months) | 1500.00 | -10.00 |
| Aluminium (3 months) | 1875.00 | -10.00 |
| Zinc (3 months) | 1005.00 | -5.00 |
| Nickel (3 months) | 100.00 | -2.00 |
| Lead (3 months) | 2100.00 | -10.00 |
| Gold (3 months) | 385.00 | -0.50 |
| Silver (3 months) | 21.50 | -0.10 |
| Platinum (3 months) | 1850.00 | -10.00 |
| Rhodium (3 months) | 1200.00 | -10.00 |

| LIFFE OPTIONS | | |
|----------------|---------|---|
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| POURNOI | 103.00 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |
| ROBUSTA COFFEE | 163.20 | + |
| COCOA | 1180.00 | + |
| WHEAT | 103.00 | + |
| SOYBEAN | 1095.50 | + |

| LONDON FINANCIAL | | |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|
| Long Gilts | 117.86 | +0.06 |
| German Govt Bond (Read) | 117.86 | +0.06 |
| Three Year Gilt | 113.38 | +0.06 |
| Five Year Gilt | 113.38 | +0.06 |
| Italian Govt Bond (BTP) | 113.38 | +0.06 |
| Japanese Govt Bond (JGB) | 113.38 | +0.06 |
| Three Month Sterling | 98.50 | +0.06 |
| Three Month Euro | 98.50 | +0.06 |
| FTSE 100 | 5615.7 | +39.0 |

LONDON FINANCIAL

| Period | Open | High | Low | Sett | Vol |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Dec 89 | 117.80 | 117.83 | 117.70 | 117.80 | 265 |
| Dec 88 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 87 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 86 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 85 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 84 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 83 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 82 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 81 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 80 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |
| Dec 79 | 117.45 | 117.80 | 117.41 | 117.80 | 2285 |

MONEY RATES

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Base Rate: Clearing Bank P. | 6.25% |
| Prime Rate: 50-50 | 6.50% |
| 90 Day T-Bill | 5.50% |
| 3 Month Euro | 5.50% |
| 3 Month Sterling | 5.50% |

EUROPEAN MONEY

| Currency | 7 day | 1 month | 3 month | 6 month | Call |
|--------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Dollar | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% |
| French Franc | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% |
| Swiss Franc | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% |
| Yen | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% | 5.75% |

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Gold Bullion (1000g) | 385.00 |
| Gold Bullion (100g) | 38.50 |
| Gold Bullion (10g) | 3.85 |
| Gold Bullion (1g) | 0.385 |
| Gold Bullion (0.1g) | 0.0385 |
| Gold Bullion (0.01g) | 0.00385 |

STERLING SPOT AND FUTURE

| Add Rates for December | Range | Close | 1 month | 3 Month |
|------------------------|---------------|-------|---------|---------|
| London | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Frankfurt | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Paris | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Zurich | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Brussels | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Amsterdam | 5.110-5.112 | 5.110 | 5.110 | 5.110 |
| Stockholm | 5.110-5.112</ | | | |

IMF must be forced into line over debt

Since the Banco Ambrosiano scandal, the Pope has not been featured in business pages but, shamefully, in this season of goodwill, apparently, he has been at the receiving end of the International Monetary Fund's unique brand of covert bullying. According to Vatican sources, the IMF (whose managing director Michel Camdessus is a committed Roman Catholic) has been putting pressure on Pope John Paul to stop talking so much about the cancellation of third world debt.

Unlike others who give in to the IMF because they are desperate for funds, the Pope is sure that his reward is in heaven and his language on debt has, if anything, been getting stronger. On December 1, he issued a Papal Bull, saying that wealthy nations should relieve the debts of developing nations in order to remove from them "the shadow of death" and, in an apostolic letter, he said: "Some nations, especially the poor ones, are oppressed by a debt so huge that repayment is practically

impossible. It is clear that there can be no real progress without effective co-operation between the peoples of every language, race, nationality and religion."

The chance to build that co-operation comes this week. The Paris Club of Western creditors meets today with Russia at the top of its agenda but time will be found to discuss debt relief for those countries in Central America devastated by Hurricane Mitch. The club is expected to agree a two to three year debt moratorium that would simply formalise the reality that Central America cannot service its debts in the foreseeable future. Tomorrow and on Friday, the leaders of Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador will meet with international donors in Washington at an emergency consultative group hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank.

The case of Central America is, of course, uniquely dreadful, but it may serve as a test of developing international opinion on the broader question of debt relief and, it is hoped, cancellation.

It is easy to be pessimistic. The response to the human catastrophe wrought by Mitch has been piecemeal, insufficient and slow. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC), the main official vehicle for debt forgiveness, proceeds at a snail's pace and, by universal agreement (outside 19th Street, Washington), will not lead to debt sustainability. Worse still, the IMF, which has the ultimate power to decide when countries get debt relief (depending on whether they meet IMF conditions of economic behaviour), remains deeply unsympathetic to the idea.

However, there is cause for hope. The IMF looks increasingly

isolated. In the past week, George Soros has said that the IMF was the problem not the solution in Asia and the World Bank, its sister institution, agreed. In its *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries*, the World Bank criticised the IMF's insistence on high interest rates to defend Asia's currencies and insisted that creditors must be ready to take their share of losses rather

than inflicting them on the poor in debtor nations. The World Bank, under the leadership of Jim Wolfensohn, is beginning to assert itself and is putting poverty reduction at the centre of its work. Crucially, this means protecting social programmes from the IMF.

Mozambique, one of the few countries so far to receive debt relief under HIPC, found that one of the IMF conditions was that it had to raise the proportion of its health spending recovered through user fees from 5 per cent in 1995 to 10 per cent in 2000. In 1992, just as the AIDS pandemic was gathering speed in Africa, user fees for health were introduced in Zimbabwe, among others, as part of IMF structural adjustment programmes. Reminded of this, Mr Wolfensohn said that this was "disastrously wrong".

Coinciding with the Papal Bull

of December 1, the United Nations Aids programme disclosed that worldwide, the number of people infected with HIV is 33.5 million, up from 27.6 million in 1997. It is no coincidence that 95 per cent of those come from those areas of Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe that have highest debt.

Despite such horrors, there are many who still argue that debt cancellation raises the issue of moral hazard. Nobody argues that conditions are unnecessary either in the case of debt or aid but the type of conditions have to change. IMF conditionality typically involves such things as balancing budgets, fighting inflation, opening up markets, privatisation. If social programmes have to be raided, tant pis. This is increasingly recognised to be both punitive and counterproductive to development. The World Bank is offering a different

set of conditions, in essence targeting both aid and debt relief at those countries least likely to abuse it and most likely to spend resources on social programmes. This is not just right but clever. If the moral hazard argument so often used by creditors is neutralised, Governments have no excuse but to start responding boldly to the increasing tide of popular opinion in favour of debt cancellation as a moral and humanitarian way to mark the millennium.

The trouble with debt relief is that unilateral action simply leaves more for others to pay. A unanimous agreement is needed, including such institutions as the IMF. It should be remembered that the IMF is only the sum of its shareholders. It can, and must, be forced into line and this week's meetings should send a strong message that this is what the world's richest nations intend.

□ To make a credit card donation to the *Oxfam/Times Bridge Appeal* to help rebuild Honduras, please telephone 01865 313131.



JANET BUSH

Trouble brews over strategy for the regional beer sector

Dominic Walsh on the Midlands tussle that reveals opposing tactics for a tightening drinks market

The decision by Marston, Thompson & Evershed, the Pedigree bitter brewer, to adjourn today's meeting on the sale of its tenanted pubs in the face of a hostile bid from Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries has put the spotlight firmly on the regional brewing sector.

On the face of it, the logic for Marston's original decision to sell its tenancies in a securitisation deal with Nomura seemed pretty compelling. The proceeds of £137 million represented a premium of 28 per cent to net book value and would have provided Marston with the funds to expand its higher-growth retail brands, notably Picher & Piano and Via Vita.

But a vote that Marston's had hoped would be a formality was turned on its head by the £262 million bid from its Midlands rival, Wolves, which has been stalking Marston's since 1992, had made its offer dependent on the disposal of the tenancies not going through. Marston's shareholders, quite understandably, asked for more time to consider matters carefully.

David Thompson, the Wolves managing director, believes that the regionals have little choice but to join forces if they are to have a realistic chance of competing with the big three of Bass, Whitbread and Scottish & Newcastle.

"The regional brewers are trading at a discount to the stock market," he said. "One of the reasons is that the industry has got costs that need to come out and the investment record has not been satisfactory because of oversupply."

The combined group would have more than 1,500 pubs and three breweries with a strong position in the Midlands. In the offer document, W&DB identifies at least £12 million of cost savings in its



Ralph Findlay, W&DB finance director, left, and David Thompson, Wolves managing director, have their sights set on Marston's

areas of head office, sales, production and logistics, although analysts believe the real savings could actually be nearer £16 million.

But while cost savings and economies of scale are central to W&DB's justification, the real issue is one of strategy. While Marston's sees no future in owning a tenanted estate simply as a vehicle for sales of its Pedigree and Marston's ales, Wolves has used the bid to reiterate its commitment to a vertically integrated business with three complementary arms: brewing, tenanted pubs and managed houses.

It is an issue that has taxed all of Britain's brewers, big and small. Cereals, for example, which eight years ago got rid of its brewing interests, is today expected to take the next step by selling its tenanted and franchised estate to Nomura in a deal worth around £375 million.

Going down the same route is Vaux, which is in the final throes of selling its two breweries and 350 tenanted pubs in order to concentrate on its

managed pubs and Swallow Hotels chain. The decision has caused a huge political row in Vaux's northeastern heartland, particularly as Sir Paul Nicholson, the group's chairman, had in the past dismissed the notion of a Vaux without breweries. Hopes are now pinned on a management buyout bid by Frank Nicholson, Sir Paul's brother, who has vowed to maintain the family's brewing heritage.

A continued decline in beer drinking in this country is the principal problem faced by the regional brewers. Although the likes of Fuller's and Greene King have successfully marketed brands such as London Pride and Abbot Ale, to brew or not to brew is still a pressing question for many. Sales of cask ales, in particular, have been on a downward trend for years, particularly as the big brewers have turned up the advertising heat behind big-brand lagers such as Carling, Foster's, Carlsberg and Stella Artois.

When Morrells, the Oxford

brewer and pub operator, called time on its independence recently it emerged that its brewery was costing £1 million a year to run. Michael Cannon, who paid £48 million for the business, only wanted the pub estate and has outsourced the brewing of Morrells' three main ales—Graduate, Oxford Ale and Varsity—to Thomas Hardy, the independent Dorchester brewer that was spun out of Eldridge Pope last year and is now a joint venture with Burtonwood Brewery. Although Thomas Hardy has no pubs of its own, it supplies beer to the estates of Burtonwood, Eldridge Pope and Morrells, none of which saw a future as integrated brewers.

But quitting brewing to run pubs is not necessarily a panacea. Eldridge Pope, for example, has just abandoned a high-profile venture into fashionable high street bars by selling eight venues—six of them trading under its Bar Excellence brand—for £8 million to Marston's, which plans to convert them to its Picher & Piano and Via Vita formats.

Eldridge Pope admitted it couldn't get the required returns from the sites, even though trade was brisk.

In a sense, this acquisition by Marston's—neatly timed just after W&DB declared its predatory intentions—sums up the different attitudes of the two opposing camps. Marston's, under Nick Letchet, its new chief executive, believes managed pubs are the way forward, offering good growth prospects and high returns on investment. Although its brewing business sits rather uneasily alongside that strategy, the sale of its tenancies comes with a four-year supply agreement. That preserves sales of its Pedigree and Marston's beers for the time being at least, although some observers believe it may sell up before the contract expires.

Conversely, W&DB has cast doubts on the returns Marston's has been able to leverage from its retail concepts. It has found from its own experience that being caught between the muscle of the big brewers and the entrepreneurial approach of the more

nimble-footed pub companies such as JD Wetherspoon and Yates Brothers Wine Lodges can be a sobering experience. Wolves believes that tenanted houses are more resilient to the vagaries of high street fads and economic downturns, and that their cash-generating ability makes them a good, solid business for the long-term.

The challenge Marston's has faced since the bid was launched is persuading shareholders that its own nascent strategy should hold sway over the more immediate attractions offered by Wolves. Mr Letchet's view is that shareholders need time to appraise these issues and that they do not want to be bound into an ill-judged decision.

It is significant that Mr Letchet has been careful not to rule out consolidation *per se*, although he believes that such consolidation should focus more on segments of the market rather than on the crunching together of vertically integrated brewers.

This is a point supported by Peter Martin, editor of *MBC Report*, the influential industry newsletter. "It comes down to having the right management for the right markets," he explained. "Even Greene King, arguably the most successful of the integrated brewers, has realised that the high street is a place for experts, not enthusiasts. It's a question of working out what you're good at and sticking to it." He pointed to the decision by Enterprise Inns to run only tenanted pubs as another example of how focusing on just one specific sector can provide excellent results.

But Mr Letchet's battle to stave off Wolves may ultimately be defeated by lack of time. One leading brewing analyst said: "Nick Letchet's strategy seems perfectly sound on paper, but he hasn't been there long enough and it is still an unproven strategy. The Wolves plan may be less exciting, but it provides more short-term attractions."

Another analyst said: "Marston's shareholders were right to call for a postponement of the securitisation. They should now press for an improved offer from Wolves—or anybody else, for that matter. It will be interesting to see whether Greene King enters the fray."

BUSINESS LETTERS

Attitude to investment in need of complete change

From Mr K. P. Grainger
Sir, In commenting on Peter Mandelson's recent exhortation for more "venture" in the venture capital industry (December 3), your City Editor repeated the well-worn excuse that there were not enough good projects. She even stated that members of the British Venture Capital Association had "raised" £6.5 billion last year, but only "placed" £4.2 billion. How, one might wonder, did they use the remaining £2.3 billion?

The previous day, on the evening of December 2, with some 50 others, I attended a meeting at the City Club, organised as one of a series by the Centre for the Study of Innovation in Investment. Apart from discussing the effective commercial exploitation of scientific and other inventions, there was a general consensus that there were plenty of good business projects around. However, it was recognised that there is an unfortunate aversion in most financial institutions to investing

in new businesses, smaller ventures and high technology in particular. It was also noted that the Venture Capital Trust scheme had done little to fill the equity gap as the trusts were concentrating their investments on gilts, management buyouts and second or third-round funding of larger, more established concerns.

The country needs "patient money", seed-corn for its new businesses, a change in the investment culture and fewer controls over the raising of smaller tranches of capital in the range of £100,000 to £1 million. This problem area was also apparent from a reading of the 1996 Bank of England Report on the financing of high-technology small businesses. If we are to prosper and compete we need, therefore, a complete change of attitude to encourage investment and risk-taking by all concerned.

Yours truly,
K. P. GRAINGER,
28 Mendip Vale, Coleford, Bath, BA3 5PP.

Terms for Britain joining EMU

From Mr Maurice Fitzpatrick
Sir, Janet Bush (December 2) suggests that France and Germany will only admit the UK to EMU on their terms. Janet is undoubtedly right, but perhaps for more reasons than she had space to set out. The key issue is the question of the circumstances in which the referendum for the UK to join EMU could be won by the "yes" campaign.

Most people agree that, while a "yes" vote in the UK referendum to join EMU is potentially achievable, the "yes" vote campaign (in my 2002) will need to mobilise all the arguments it can. The central theme will be that the UK will have lost competitive advantage, *vis-à-vis* EMU countries, as a result of being outside EMU.

Consider what would happen if a referendum was won by the "yes" campaign and we

then applied for membership: the EMU countries would recognise that they were losing a competitive advantage by allowing us in. In return for entry, they would set conditions—as Janet said.

As a firm, we remain of the view that if it is in the UK's interest that we join EMU then we should do so. In this context, and as when the time comes, we shall examine the conditions in detail. One point that is not yet entirely clear is whether the intention is for the detailed conditions of entry to be finalised before or after the referendum, and the Treasury might like to clarify this point. Yours faithfully,
MAURICE FITZPATRICK,
Head of Economics,
Chantray Vellacott DFK,
Russell Square House,
10-12 Russell Square,
London, WC1B 5LF.

Marketing madness at Midland

From Mr Roger M. Hancock
Sir, So the Midland Bank is to "disappear" (*Business News*, November 28)—let's hope it doesn't take my money with it. I was saddened when the griffin disappeared last year—a familiar, friendly and instantly recognisable emblem that most companies would like to invent for themselves, but no, it was out of date, irrelevant and fusty. I expect its place has been taken by an irrelevant, meaningless symbol. It stretches credibility to believe that the replacement of the Midland's solid name and reputation by the anonymous initials of an even more anonymous multinational can enhance its business.

The fact that the name of this multinational encompasses such dangerous regions as Hong Kong and Shanghai makes the decision appear even less attractive in these times of financial instability and uncertainty in those areas.

Are the bank's marketing executives out of control? Yours faithfully,
ROGER M. HANCOCK,
The Maldives House,
Castle Street,
Raglan,
Gwent,
NP23 2DS.

Poll axed

AN UPSET in the City elections, where Judith Mayhew, powerful head of the Corporation of London's policy and resources committee, had been facing a challenge. There were five candidates for four seats in her Queenhithe ward, and suggestions that the forthright Mayhew, not popular with the Corporation's old guard, could lose her seat.

Mayhew breezed through, top of the poll, with 27 votes. (This is the



"If you're a Newcastle fan, you may want to look away now"

City, remember.) But Brian Mooney, a journalist and a first-time winner, came in at second place with 23 votes. So he ousted Richard Martin, a solicitor and a councillor since 1986 who gets the *Portillo* Bulletin, having persuaded five citizens to vote for him.

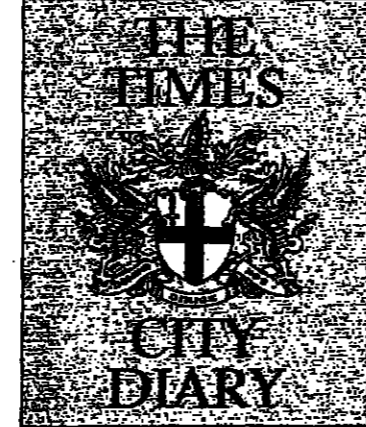
Overall turnout was 57 per cent. Not bad for local elections, even if it did mean a grand total of 85 people.

ANOTHER victory for the forces of barbarism. *Farrington Records* in Leadenhall Market, the classical music specialist, is closing early in the New Year when the lease runs out. The store, something of a City landmark, was sold by WH Smith along with *Our Price* to Virgin Retail at the start of the year.

It will come as no comfort to regulars that Virgin seemed barely aware it owned *Farrington* yesterday. City music lovers will no longer be able to browse in civilised surroundings. Instead you will have to make do with Billie, or whatever other witless trash they want you to buy in future.

Money talks

AN OLD problem has come back to haunt MoneyWorld, the personal finance website. In May I wrote of an



American entrepreneur who set up a hardcore pornographic site with virtually the same address. MoneyWorld succeeded in having the site closed for a while. But he has set up in business again.

I was alerted by a contributor whose 18-year-old son recently came across the site. Danny Bowers, MoneyWorld's editor, says he has again contacted the individual involved, one Henry Pena operating out of Florida.

In such cases it is often a matter of buying the offending address off the owner. But Pena claims to be making thousands of dollars a week out of the MoneyWorld name.

Bowers is trying to change his mind and has hired an American lawyer. He is even negotiating with the firm that allows Pena access to the Web. But there seems no easy solution.

Child's play

THERE was a time when the Abbey National was content to provide funds to allow people to buy their homes. Then the Abbey decided to become a bank, and mortgages were far too dull.

Now the lunatics, sorry, the marketing men, have finally taken over. The bank has signed a deal with the LEGO Group. From now on LEGO sets for children to play with and LEGO catalogues will be available at more than 800 branches.

You can go to LEGOLAND at Windsor and play with automated cash machines, should you be so desperate. There will be an Abbey National roadshow there. The staggering thing is that the Abbey, in its stupidity, has failed to prise a single penny from LEGO for this free advertising.

From bricks and mortar to LEGO in only a few years. Has the world gone mad, or have I?

American ale

AMERICANS have developed a thirst for Newcastle Brown. Brian Stewart, chief executive of Scottish & Newcastle, says last year 36 million pints went to the States, and they could soon be outdrinking us.

It seems a sad reflection on students today. In my day we were encouraged by the campus myth of several wards in Tyneside hospitals filled solely with typhoid enthusiasts. I wonder if the same myth still circulates?

MARTIN WALLER



Brian Davis: fronting roadshow at a financially sensitive time

OF RATHER more use than one of the Abbey's *LEGO* love-ins is the road show in Brighton held by the Nationwide tomorrow. The building society normally sends a board member along, and this time it is the turn of Brian Davis, chief executive.

Very commendable, but I wonder if he consulted his diary? With the possibility of another interest rate cut, it may not be the best day to listen to the complaints of retired investors.

the creditors... upset to talk after the hearing... they tried to hammer a stake... assaulted by Mr. Rush.

Main table containing unit trust prices for various funds, organized in columns with headers for fund names and prices.

Advertisement for John Grooms, a charity for disabled people, with contact information and a logo.

Equities bounce back

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

| 1998 | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High |
|-----------------------------------|------|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| BANKS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| BREWERIES, PUBS & REST | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| ELECTRICITY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| ELECTRONIC & ELECT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| BUILDING MATERIALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| CHEMICALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| CONSTRUCTION | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| DISTRIBUTORS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| ENGINEERING VEHICLES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |

| 1998 | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High |
|-----------------------------|------|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| FOOD MANUFACTURERS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| LEISURE & HOTELS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| MINING | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| OIL & GAS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| OTHER FINANCIAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| PHARMACEUTICALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| RETAILERS, FOOD | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| RETAILERS, GENERAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| SUPPORT SERVICES | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |

| 1998 | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High |
|-------------------------------|------|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| PROPERTY | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| TELECOMMUNICATIONS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| TRANSPORT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| WATER | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |

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| 1998 | Low | Company | Price | High | Low | Company | Price | High |
|---|------|---------|-------|------|-----|---------|-------|------|
| SHORTS (under 5 years) | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| LONGS (over 15 years) | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| UPDATED | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |
| INDEX-LINKED (on projected inflation of 5% 3%) | | | | | | | | |
| 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 | 1.40 | 100 | 1.40 | Asahi | 1.40 |

Edward Fennell introduces a two-page report on the value to British industry of yesterday's National Training Awards



Streets ahead: Cutts Shiers Solicitors of Derbyshire



Blooming: Thompson's Plant and Garden Centre, Kent



Just what the doctor ordered: Prospect Hospice of Wiltshire



A cut above the rest: Feathers Salon Group of Essex

With people power, everyone's a winner

From the car industry in the Midlands to financial services in the City, the story is becoming increasingly familiar. Employers are reducing their workforces in order to become more efficient.

This does not just mean cutting out "the fat". Most of that went a long time ago. It means that individual workers need to work better, and be more adaptable, to produce higher output than they used to.

There is only one formula to achieve that — to reorganise and train staff to meet the new objectives.

Yesterday's presentation of National Training Awards in London was a celebration of what training can do to turn around both company fortunes and the lives of individuals.

Although the immediate focus was on an elite group of 13 special winners, the event also marked the achievements of a total of 73 National Training Award winners spread across the UK.

For Geoff Armstrong of the Institute of Personnel & Development, who chaired the judging panel, the National Training Awards exemplify the message that training is the only way to make a breakthrough in a new market or with a new product.

"We have undertaken research with Sheffield University into manufacturing industry. The results showed that, on a like-for-like basis, the development of an organisation's people is what contributes most to improvements in performance."

"It was three times more significant than research and development and many times more important than the introduction of quality systems."

So, despite the difficulties now being faced by many employers, Mr Armstrong takes pride in the massive advances in productivity achieved by large parts of British industry in recent years.

"Quality used to be the dis-

'Only workers willing to adapt and retrain will have a future'

tinguishing feature between success and failure," he says. "Now customers take quality for granted. Instead, it is the way that people are managed and developed which makes the critical difference to an organisation's performance."

The problem with industry is not that our best is not good enough — our best can stand comparison with any in the world. The problem is that, "like Halley's comet, we have a very long tail."

Mr Armstrong explains: "In the UK, unlike in rival countries, many organisations are not very committed to developing their people. We also have a large number of young people leaving school with no qualifications."

So the main aim of National Training Awards is to provide role models to inspire and spread better practice throughout UK industry by showing what can be achieved by more effective training.

Success stories, exemplified by special winners, are impressive. For example, RHP is a small bearings manufacturer in Newark, Nottinghamshire. Under the leadership of its Japanese chief executive, Seiichi Asaka, the business succeeded in dramatically reducing its level of rework from 20 per cent to just over 1 per cent, while also increasing output by a third.

This was all achieved using the same workforce, the same machinery and the same measuring equipment. The big difference lay in carefully targeting a training exercise. This followed research which revealed that older, more experienced workers tended to be less accurate in their work. Remedial training was put into place and work performance rose.

"We moved from blaming to supporting one another and a team spirit took hold," says instructor Paul Newton. "Our evaluation showed that every single operator improved their performance as a result of the training."

A similar story comes from ScottishPower. Faced by the challenge of the new market in electricity supplies, it decided that it needed specifically to boost the performance of its procurement staff.

It invested £30,000 in training and achieved in reply "some dramatic business improvements", the company's Colin Duthie says. As a result, ScottishPower feels that it is much better placed to meet the challenges of market competition and regulatory pressures.

But the National Training Awards are not just about companies. Individuals are also recognised for their special achievements.

Given the unpredictable nature of the jobs market, people are being encouraged to be much more self-reliant and to take responsibility for both their career direction and their vocational learning. A good example in an age of celebrity chefs is provided by Noel McMeel, the owner of Trompets in Magherafelt, Co Antrim, who was praised for his "infectious enthusiasm" by *Harpers & Queen's* restaurant guide.

Mr McMeel started at the bottom in catering but passionately pursued opportunities for learning, including spending time at the Johnson & Wales University in America and the Ecole le Notre in Paris. Having managed his own self-development, Mr McMeel now backs his staff. "Everyone should be allowed to develop themselves, and I want all my staff to have successful and fulfilled careers," he says.



High-flyers in training: Gatwick Airport Division of Sussex Police which patrols the terminals

- Aldercre Infants School, Langley Mill, Notts
- APION Ltd, Belfast
- Base Leisure Retail, Birmingham (two separate awards)
- Belfast City Airport Fire Service, Belfast
- Bombardier Aerospace — Shorts, Belfast
- BBC News Resources, White City, London
- British Steel Engineering Steels, Rotherham
- Cable & Wireless Global Marine, Chelmsford
- Camden Training Centre, London
- Carnaud Metal Box (Aerosol UK), Sutton in Ashfield, Notts
- Classon Industries Ltd, Kingswinford, West Midlands
- Contributions Agency, South East Region, Maidstone, Kent
- Crowsee Plaza, West Drayton, Middlesex
- Cutts Shiers Solicitors, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
- DAK(TN) Limited, Antrim
- Defence Evaluation Research Agency (DERA), Salisbury, Wiltshire with International Training Services Ltd
- De Post(UK) Ltd, Dumfries, with Dumfries & Galloway Enterprise Express Group, Express 2 Automotive, Stanley, Co Durham
- Feathers Salon Group, Colchester, Essex
- Fernanagh Community Care Training, Ernistillen, Co Fermanagh
- Galliford UK Ltd, Hinckley, Leicestershire
- Glasgow City Council, Glasgow
- Granada Television Ltd, Manchester
- HairTek, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex
- Impact Development Training Group, Windermere, Cumbria
- International Training Service Ltd, Belfast
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York
- MEB-Midlands Electricity plc, Halesowen, West Midlands
- The Merchants Group, Minehead, Somerset
- National Museums & Galleries, Merseyside, Liverpool
- Orkney Fishermen's Society Ltd, Orkney
- Osd Enterprises Ltd, Newport, Isle of Wight



- PowerGen plc, Nottingham, with Severn Trent Water Ltd
- Prospect Hospice, Swindon, Wiltshire
- RHP Precision, Newark, Nottinghamshire
- Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, London, with Camden & Clerkenwell Food Research Association, Tameside College, and Reckless College of Further Education, Weybridge
- Scania (Great Britain) Limited, Milton Keynes
- ScottishPower, Power Systems, Glasgow
- Shaw Park Primary School, Kingston-upon-Hull
- Shell UK Ltd, Ellesmere Port, South Wirral
- Sibbald Limited, Armadale, West Lothian, with Lothian & Borders Fire Brigade
- Simco Community Northern Ireland, Belfast
- Smurfit Corrugated, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham
- Sussex Police, Gatwick Airport Division, Gatwick, West Sussex
- The Equitable Life Assurance Society, Aylesbury, Bucks
- The University of Sheffield, Sheffield
- Thompson's Plant & Garden Centres, Chislehurst, Kent, with John Darrell & Associates
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK Ltd, Burnaston, Derbyshire
- TPL Hairdressing, Stoke on Trent
- Triple A Animal Hotel & Care Centre, West Boldon, Washington, Tyne & Wear
- Tyne & Wear Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Newcastle upon Tyne, with Northumbria Police, Northumbria Ambulance Services and Tyne & Wear Emergency Planning Unit
- Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust, Walsall
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall
- Walham Forest Training Agency, Walham Forest, London
- Woodlands Special School, Blackpool, Lancashire

INDIVIDUAL WINNERS
Kenneth Bailey, Leicester
Clive Blanchette, Codsall, Staffs
Cathy Byrne, Kingston-upon-Hull
Gillian Conway, Middlesbrough
Mandy Dow, Stirling
Jane Fall, Lower Morden, Surrey
Noel McMeel, Toomebridge, Co Antrim
Marea Pedder, Belfast
Paul Reaney, Sheffield
Ian Sykes, Kingston-upon-Hull
Emma Vanghan, Northwich, Cheshire
John Waters, Wigorn
Paul Webb, Stoke-on-Trent
Gleyp Williams, Cardiff
Charlotte Wilson, Ennistillen, Co Fermanagh

The National Training Awards are a yardstick of industry's approach to training. Set up by the Conservative Government in the late 1980s, they have proved to be a durable tribute to the original vision and an inspiration to British industry.

But are they still relevant today? "They are," says Murray, the chief executive of the CBI, "because they are valuable — not least because they give employers an opportunity to learn from the experience."

"There has been impressive progress in the take-up of training by industry in the past ten years," she says. "NTAs have highlighted good practice and stimulated other employers to say 'I could do that'."

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, agrees.

"NTA winners are walking talking examples of the rewards which lifelong learning brings for businesses and individuals," he says.

"NTAs are being used by companies in all sectors as a basis for business plans, and an incentive to investors in people."

With a possible recession looming, it is more important than ever that employers are reminded of the vital role that training can play in enabling businesses to survive hard times.

Asked about government progress in the past 12 months on improving the UK's skill base, Mr Blunkett points to the investment of £60 million this year to fund 120 centres of excellence in information technology and other high-tech skills, and another £26 million allocated to fund training for small businesses and also to combat the millennium bug.

A National Skills Task Force has been set up to identify

gaps in the national workforce, while the new Regional Development Agencies are working with further and higher education colleges to develop regional skills targets.

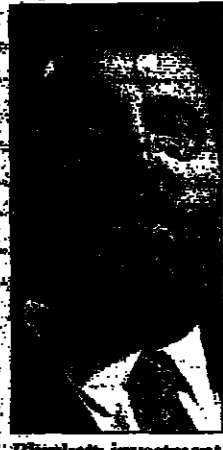
Mr Blunkett also highlights the work that the Government is doing with the network of National Training Organisations to strengthen performance in individual industrial sectors. "We are working with the NTO national council to secure year-on-year improvement," he says.

"We want NTOs to be proactive, strong and influential representatives of their sectors and occupational groups."


The public voice of NTOs is Andy Powell, the chief executive of the National Council of Industry Training Organisations, who welcomes the change in management attitudes to training. A judge in this year's National Training Awards, he recognises the impact the awards have made in raising awareness of the importance of training.

NTAs also provide politicians and administrators with a monitor of hot issues in industry. In recent years, for example, information technology and customer services have been popular fields for investment. Michael Osbaldeston, an NTA judge from City and Guilds, says that growing use of national vocational qualifications has become an important feature of award-winning training.

"The benefit of using qualifications is now striking in with employers. This goes beyond just the training of young people or new entrants," he says. "Exceptional changes can be achieved through developing people and the award of qualifications can be an important part of that process."




Blunkett investment



Shell U.K. Limited

Proud of our people - proud of our award...




SOUTH EAST REGION

The Contributions Agency are pleased to add the National Training Award to the list of their South East Region's successes.


The award recognises the excellence of in-house training given to staff at the Regional Training Enquiry Centre

The Enquiry Centre was originally a pilot exercise - it has now been permanently commissioned and will be expanded into other related areas.

The Equitable Life

NATIONAL TRAINING AWARD WINNER



We are delighted to have received national recognition for the training that we provide.

Organized by the Personnel Investment Authority

They turned aspiration into success

John Young applauds the NTA special winners

Thirteen winners of this year's special awards exemplify the scope and diversity of the scheme. They vary from a multinational chemical manufacturer to an animal welfare centre, a training and safety centre for industrial workers and a school for children with impaired hearing.

Two women winners transformed their careers through determination. Mandy Dow, who started part-time work as a schoolgirl at the Cross Keys Hotel in Kippen, Stirlingshire, is now its manager. With her Certificate in Supervisory Management she showed confidence by suggesting innovations — and ultimately won the Employee of the Year title for Scotland. Other hotels and restaurants are now seeking her advice on training.

"I started out with no qualifications and needed only determination and the support of colleagues and my employer," she says.

After raising a family, at the age of 40 Barbara McGregor showed similar determination by studying for a GCSE in English. She later achieved a number of higher qualifications, including a BA in Organisation Studies, and was named Student of the Year.

Mrs McGregor, now a co-ordinator for the GNVQ Advanced Business Course at Dewsbury College, West Yorkshire, is described by a former tutor as a remarkable teacher. "I started out as a very apprehensive student," she says, "and I can now help similar students grow into confident individuals."

Three years ago Shaw Park Primary School in Hull had failed its Ofsted inspection. Standards and morale were so low that staff were issued with alarms to guard against attack by angry parents. Then the American system "assertive discipline" was introduced and staff were trained to deal with disruptive behaviour. Pupils were given a list of rules, rewards and sanctions while parents were asked to pledge support.

Now it's a happy place to work, says the head teacher, Michaela Saunders. Student intake is rising and inspectors noted a significant improvement.

RHP Precision, a bearings manufacturer at Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire, scored an impressive turnaround by solving a production problem that caused faults in one fifth of daily output. A training programme was introduced by Paul Newton, the company instructor, which cut the rate of imperfect work to just over 1 per cent — yet boosted output by a third.

Sceptics were silenced when performance graphs showed that output by the most experienced workers was the least satisfactory. "This had a dramatic and positive effect on attitudes and motivation," Mr Newton says. "A team spirit took hold. We are using the same equipment, the same machines and the same people as before. It's the training that has made the difference."

Aldercar Infant School, at Langley Mill, Derbyshire, had until recently taught children with impaired hearing in a special unit, separate from its mainstream classes. But Terry Nuttall, the head teacher, decided that integration would improve learning capabilities for both sets of pupils.

All teachers were trained to use sign language, and this spread to parents and hearing pupils. "Our deaf children

now see themselves as part of a mainstream school with access to all areas of the curriculum," claims Mrs Nuttall. "Many of our hearing children now have a good command of sign language and can converse easily with their deaf friends."

A staff training programme at Express 2 Automotive, an engineering company based at Stanley, Durham, in collaboration with South West Training Ltd and Durham Tec, was aimed at upgrading skills in everything from management to tooling and lathe-turning.

Within three months, production rose by £100,000 a month. "By the year 2000 we have a projected annual turnover of £10 million," says the managing director, Roy Stanley. "It's a fantastic achievement."

Artu Adlington, managing partner of Triple 'A' Animal Hotel and Care Centre near Washington, Tyne and Wear, was determined to provide a five-star service for cats and dogs. So far, 95 staff have completed the animal care NVQ programme. Mrs Adlington believes that the centre is setting standards for the rest of the industry. The family-run company has produced educational manuals, learning materials and exam papers, and uses videos, CD-Roms and the Internet in its seven-days-a-week programme.

"Training is a way of life," adds Mrs Adlington. "Everyone in the team shows great enthusiasm."

Privatisation of the utilities and the opening of the electricity market to competition stimulated ScottishPower, Power Systems, to compare its performance with established private sector companies. The analysis persuaded it to invest some £30,000 in a programme to train 26 procurement staff, which has already achieved savings of several million pounds.

Suppliers were invited to attend workshops, visits to customers were arranged, and those taking part in the course were encouraged to debate issues raised by case studies.

"The training has led to all sorts of business improvements," says Doug Bridson, the general manager of procurement. "We are now better placed to meet the challenges of market competition and regulatory pressures."

A similar dilemma faced Mines Rescue Service Ltd of Crossgates, Fife, with the run-down of the mining industry and the privatisation of the remaining few working pits. Having previously provided expert safety training for miners, it realised that its future depended on diversifying into other industries. "We felt that our experience qualified us to work in industries such as power generation, water and chemicals, but what we didn't know was whether our quality

was right," explains the company manager, Andrew Watson.

It set about retraining staff in the knowledge and requirements of industries other than mining, and has since trained more than 2,000 people from organisations as diverse as Fife council, ScottishPower and Strathclyde Fire Brigade.

When Du Pont advertised for staff for its new £62 million polyester film plant in Dumfries, it received more than 2,700 applicants. The 42 people eventually selected had no previous experience of film-making technology and were chosen for their general abilities and qualities. The trainees were split into seven teams, each led by an expert in a particular process. The time taken

to commission the new plant was one third of the company's previous best performance and only a month longer than the world record, without any injuries.

Alan McLennaghan, the operations team leader, says: "People have learnt how to learn. That ability will never be lost and will help them as individuals and us as a business long into the future."

Four years ago, the survival of Clamson Industries Ltd, automotive engineers, in the West Midlands, was threatened by overdependence on one customer and disruption of production caused by the introduction of new processes and products. "Many organi-

sations would have responded to the crisis we faced by slashing their training budget," says Michael Jukes, the chairman. "We did the opposite." A new programme was launched to reduce the hierarchy, introduce new management controls, improve marketing and abandon the piecemeal approach to production.

The company has since won several contracts and received an award from the Centre for Manufacturing Excellence.

Granada TV launched its satellite operation facing the challenge of making 20 hours of new programmes a week, and increasing that to 26 after two months — on only a tenth of the budget then available to terrestrial programmes. In only ten weeks it recruited and trained 64 young people as researchers and production assistants, and the results went on air a month later. "Instead of designing the programmes and then employing the talent needed to execute them, we decided that we would let the developing skills of the new recruits determine the format," explains Felicity Bridgewater, Granada's head of training and development.

Galliford UK, a construction company at Hinckley, Leicestershire, has trained 120 staff in customer relations, particularly in providing early cost and project information. Its human resources director, Tony Welch, says: "We have been genuinely stunned at the extent of our success."



Granada Television: allowed the skills of new recruits to determine programme formats

'Hearing children can now talk to their deaf friends'

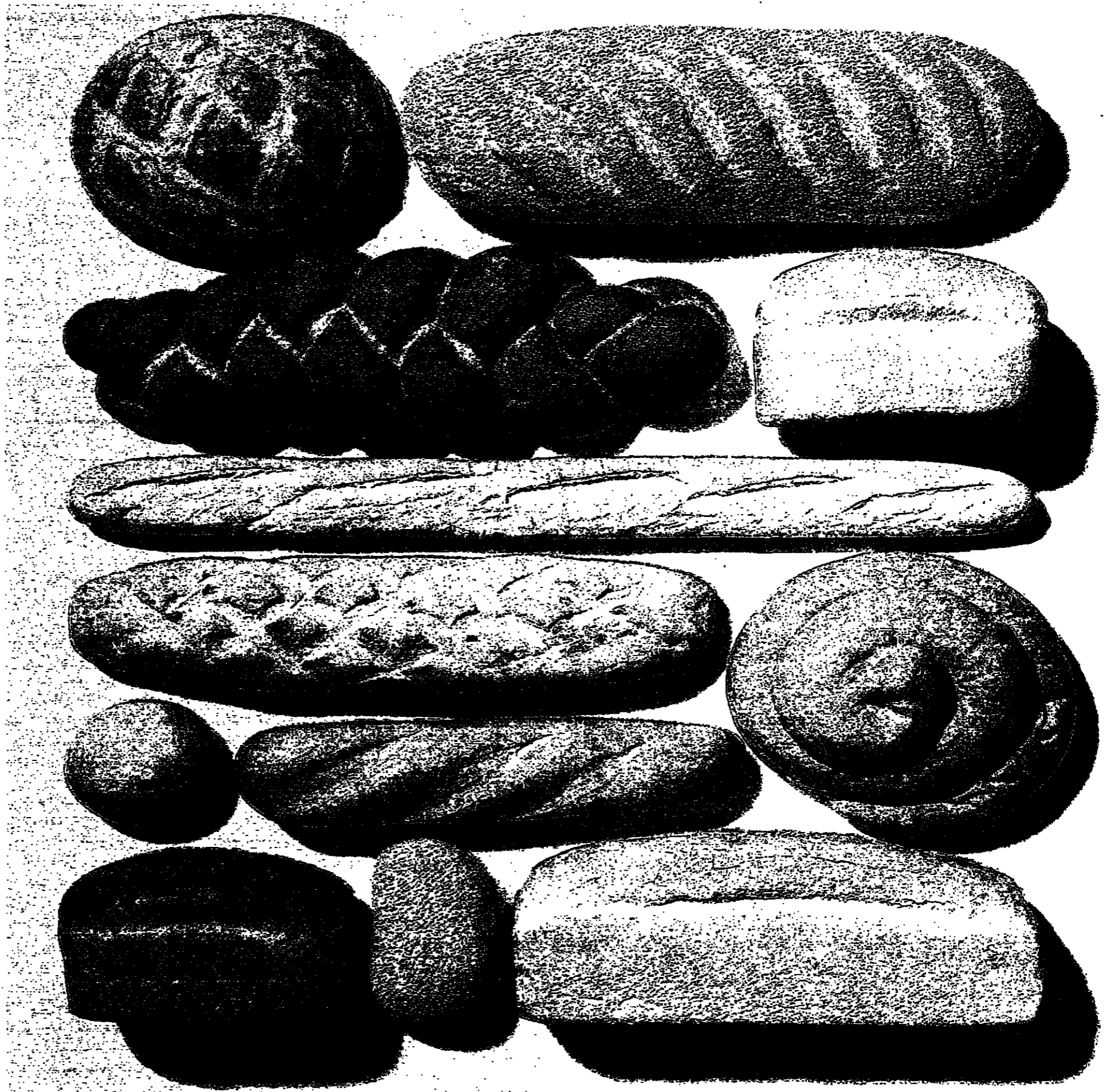


Shaw Park Primary: could do better — and now it has



Clamson Industries: embarked on more training, not less

To bring you the best bread at Sainsbury's, we put a bit of dough behind our bakers.



This year Sainsbury's has won a National Training award. It recognises the way we've invested in training our bakery managers. Because at Sainsbury's, we ask our

bakers to make their bread instore from scratch, using traditional methods, and no short cuts. 2.4 million loaves are baked like this every week from hundreds of tonnes

of dough. Not surprising then, that our bread sells like hot cakes.

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Court of Appeal

Law Report December 9 1998

Court of Appeal

Rule fixing fax service not applicable

Venables v Mirror Group Newspapers Ltd
Before Lord Justice Balguy, Lord Justice Otton and Lord Justice Mummery
[Judgment December 2]
Although service by fax after 4pm on a business day was too late for service that day, rule 5.2B(3) of Order 65 of the Rules of the Supreme Court did not apply to an "unless order" which required compliance by 4.30pm.

The Court of Appeal so held in allowing an appeal by the defendants, Mirror Group Newspapers Ltd, from the refusal by Mr Justice Popplewell on October 24, 1997 to extend time for compliance with an "unless order" in a libel action.

Order 65, rule 5 provides: "(2B) Where the fax is transmitted on a business day before 4pm, it shall, unless the contrary is shown, be deemed to be served on that day, and, in any other case, on the business day next following."

Mr Michael Crane, QC and Mr Michael Sullivan for MGN; Mr James Bonney, QC and Mr Jeremy Callinan for Mr Venables.

LORD JUSTICE MANTELL said that in the action the plaintiffs' solicitors were particularly concerned to get hold of the reporter's notes.

On July 22, 1997 Master Hodgson made an order that unless the plaintiff complied with a previous consent order for their production

by 4.30pm on July 31, 1997 the defence would be struck out. At 4.0pm on that day an attempt was made to fax the documents. It was open to them to do so, the plaintiffs' solicitors having included a fax number in their correspondence heading: see rule 5.2B(1c).

They were not received because the plaintiffs' solicitors' fax machine had been switched off to allow an engineer to work on their computer. On telephoning the plaintiffs' solicitors it was learned that the machine would be out of action for half an hour.

Mr Oliver Smith, a solicitor in the firm acting for the defendant, immediately set off to deliver the documents by hand but it was some minutes after the deadline when they were handed over.

Consequently, the defendant took out a summons seeking an extension of time which was necessary for the production of five or ten minutes. The judge took account of the approach laid down in Hynes v Information Systems Ltd v Coventry City Council [1997] 1 WLR 1606. He refused to extend time.

The judge did not appear to have had his attention drawn to MGN's fax machine, which was shown to be out of action on the day. It was held that if solicitors had a fax number on their letter heading they should not be able to withdraw their acceptance of service by fax unless such withdrawal was stated on their letter heading.

Alternatively, if a party sought to preclude service by fax there had to be proper notice to the party from whom the ability to serve the fax was being withdrawn.

In other words, once it had been represented that service would be accepted by fax, it was incumbent

on the solicitor making the representation to keep the fax line open and consequently if the line was closed for some reason, good or bad, the fact that the facility had been withdrawn was not an irrelevant consideration to the exercise of discretion.

It did seem that the judge might have reached a different conclusion had the decision in MGN v Gayton International had been brought to his notice.

So, ignoring the cross-appeal and basing himself on the same premise as the judge, namely that service by fax before 4.30pm on July 31, 1997 would have been good, his Lordship would allow the appeal by extending the time for compliance to encompass the personal service by Mr Smith.

To do otherwise would be to inflict an injustice on the defaulting party which would be out of proportion to the breach and to the failure by the plaintiffs' solicitors to give notice of the intention to withdraw the fax facility.

But the cross-appeal could not be ignored. His Lordship stated the service after 4pm by fax would not be deemed to be service on that day.

He argued that, even if the judge was correct in the point of construction, the meaning of the rule was not such as would allow service after 4pm on a business day to be counted as service on that day.

His Lordship had no doubt that the judge's construction of the rule was correct in that, placed in the sentence where it was, the phrase "unless the contrary is shown" must qualify the deeming of service on that day and the deeming of service on the business day next following.

But that did nothing to illuminate the meaning of the rule. What was meant or intended by the words "unless the contrary is shown" was helpful to ask what was otherwise to be deemed. Under both limbs service was deemed

to be on a particular day, in the one case on the day of transmission and in the other case on the next business day.

The "contrary" would be that service was not affected on that day, in the one case, or on the next business day in the other. It would follow that the words "unless the contrary is shown" could be employed to put back the time of service but not to bring it forward.

That would lead to the conclusion that in the instant case service after 4pm would not have been good service under Order 65, rule 5.2B. That being so, Mr Bonney was able to argue that the plaintiffs' fax machine being out of order was clearly an irrelevant consideration. At any time after 4pm it was too late to serve by fax.

In his Lordship's judgment, that might well be the case if one was considering whether service between 4 and 4.30pm would have been in compliance with Order 65, rule 5.2B. But that was not the question here.

The question was: Would there have been compliance with the terms of the "unless order"? In the circumstances his Lordship would hold that for all practical purposes and certainly as a matter affecting the exercise of discretion, the judge was right in considering service by fax up to 4.30pm to be sufficient to ensure compliance with the order.

Consequently, although he had accepted Mr Bonney's submission on the meaning of Order 65, rule 5.2B, his Lordship was not deterred from the provisional view that the appeal ought to be allowed.

Lord Justice Otton agreed and Lord Justice Balguy gave a concurring judgment.

Solicitors: Devenport Lyons; John Bowden Trainer & Co.

Naming children banned even if order not made

In re R (Minor) (Court of Appeal) Order against identification
Before Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Buxton-Stos and Lord Justice Evans
[Judgment December 2]
A restriction on the identification of a child was included in all orders involving children under the Children Act 1989.

It was open to any party to argue that the restriction should not apply in any particular case. However, it was open to any party to argue that the restriction should apply in any particular case.

The Court of Appeal, Civil Division, so stated in dismissing an application by a father to set aside part of an order made following the dismissal by the Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Evans and Mr Justice Wilson) on November 17, 1997 of his appeal against an order made by Judge Collier at Brighton County Court on July 23, 1996 under section 91(4) of the Children Act 1989 that no further application be made by him in respect of his child without the leave of the court.

The father sought to set aside the part of the order which prohibited the publication or revelation of anything which would be likely to lead to the identification of the child.

Solicitors: Davenport Lyons; John Bowden Trainer & Co.

However, for a child to be identified as a child whose parents were in dispute over his upbringing could subject him to stress and anxiety.

It was important that the child should not be damaged by the dispute and therefore it was accepted by the Court of Appeal that in general the identity of a child should be protected.

The father had accepted that there were no special circumstances relating to his child that made publication of his identity desirable. He was, he said, taking a point of principle.

However, there was always a danger that the court through an oversight might fail to direct that an order be included prohibiting the identification of a child, and great harm could be caused to that child as a result.

The present practice allowed cases to be disposed of in public and allowed the particular circumstances of an individual case to be taken into account.

The result of the father's application was that it had enabled the court to make clear that it approved the present practice and it would enable those who did not know of that practice to be made aware of it.

Lord Justice Buxton-Stos and Lord Justice Evans agreed.

Lawful overstayer deserves protection of Act

Regina v Lambeth London Borough Council, Ex parte Sarhang
Before Mr Justice Kay
[Judgment November 17]
A person who entered the United Kingdom with permission, was lawfully detained in prison and then remained in the UK because he could not, despite his willingness, be removed in accordance with a deportation order.

A deportation order and directions for his removal from the UK to Sweden were made, however it appeared that the Swedish authorities would not permit him to return to Sweden because of his conviction.

The applicant was not permitted to work, and upon his release from prison sought assistance for accommodation from the council under section 21(1).

The council refused assistance on the ground that as the applicant was not lawfully present in the UK, he had not sought asylum in the UK to show that his removal to Sweden would not be to his benefit.

Mr Justice Kay so held in the Queen's Bench Division when granting an application by Rassoul Sarhang to quash the decision of the London Borough of Lambeth made in July 1998 not to make arrangements to provide him with housing as a person in need of care and attention under section 21(1) of the 1948 Act.

Mr Manji Gill and Mr Ranvij Khosla for the applicant; Mr Michael Stapperton, QC and Mr Peter Oldham for Lambeth.

MR JUSTICE KAY said that the applicant was granted political asylum from Iran in Sweden and came to the UK where he was convicted of drug offences and imprisoned.

A deportation order and directions for his removal from the UK to Sweden were made, however it appeared that the Swedish authorities would not permit him to return to Sweden because of his conviction.

The applicant was not permitted to work, and upon his release from prison sought assistance for accommodation from the council under section 21(1).

The council refused assistance on the ground that as the applicant was not lawfully present in the UK, he had not sought asylum in the UK to show that his removal to Sweden would not be to his benefit.

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Mr Manji Gill and Mr Ranvij Khosla for the applicant; Mr Michael Stapperton, QC and Mr Peter Oldham for Lambeth.

Additionally, there was no reason why he should have applied for asylum when he had no desire to remain here.

Solicitors: Amin & Co; Brian; Mr Ged Curran, Lambeth.

Non-citation of Lords' case undermines decision

Hughes v Kingston upon Hull City Council
Before Lord Justice Rose and Mr Justice Mitchell
[Judgment November 9]
The decision of the Court of Appeal in That Trading Co (a Firm) v Taylor [The Times March 4, 1998; [1998] 2 W.L.R. 993] was undermined by the non-citation of that case in Swain v The Law Society [1998] 1 AC 958.

The Solicitors' Practice Rules 1990 made under the provisions of section 31 of the Solicitors Act 1974 did have the force of law. Where therefore a solicitor entered into a contingency fee arrangement in criminal proceedings, rule 8 of the 1990 rules, by which contingency fees were prohibited, rendered unenforceable such a contingency fee arrangement.

The Queen's Bench Division Court so held in dismissing an appeal by Thomas Hughes by way of case stated against the decision of Mr Stephen Vickers, Deputy Stipendiary Magistrate, at Kingston

upon Hull, on January 18, 1998, not to order Kingston upon Hull City Council to pay Mr Hughes's costs under section 82(1) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as a contingency fee arrangement had been found to exist.

On April 8, 1997, Mr Hughes had signed a retainer, prepared by Sydney Mitchell, solicitors, on April 2, 1997, in relation to proceedings which his premises constituted a statutory nuisance under section 79(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The works required by the city council were completed in September 1997 and criminal proceedings were withdrawn on December 15, 1997.

On February 5, 1998 a hearing took place to determine costs. The magistrate found that Mr Hughes was not aware of any liability as to the costs of the proceedings which he could incur either at the time of signing the retainer or later.

He was not aware which costs he would be liable to and, in particular, was unaware that he might be liable for the council's costs should his prosecution fail. Mr

Hughes was not kept informed of the court hearings taken in his name, and Sydney Mitchell did not intend to pursue a claim for costs against him if the case failed.

As Mr Hughes was a pensioner, in receipt of state benefit, his impecuniosity should have been aware to his solicitors when they had advised him under the legal aid Green Form scheme.

It therefore followed that Mr Hughes was unable to seek an order for costs even if successful in establishing liability under section 82 of the 1990 Act as the agreement regarding costs was a contingency fee contrary to public policy.

Rule 8 of the Solicitors' Practice Rules 1990 provides: "A solicitor who is retained or employed to prosecute or defend any action, suit or other contentious proceeding shall not enter into any arrangement to receive a contingency fee in respect of that proceeding."

Rule 8(2)(c) provides: "(2) ... (c) 'contingency fee' means a fee (whether fixed, or calculated either as a percentage of the proceeds or

otherwise howsoever) payable only in the event of success in the prosecution or defence of any action, suit or other contentious proceeding."

Ms Valerie Eastly for Mr Hughes; Mr James Findlay for Hull City Council.

LORD JUSTICE ROSE said that the appeal by way of case stated was unique and involved the presentation to the Divisional Court of arguments of a crucial character not presented to the deputy stipendiary magistrate and involved the Divisional Court being invited to say that a decision of the Court of Appeal reached subsequent to the decision of the magistrate, but one which was drawn to his attention during the preparation of the case stated, was decided per incuriam, because a previous decision of the House of Lords had not been cited to the Court of Appeal.

His Lordship said that it was to be noted that the reference made in the case stated to the provision of the Solicitors' Practice Rules and that the matter had pro-

ceeded on behalf of the respondents by reference to public policy submissions and the decision in British Waterways v Norman [1994] 2 H.L.R. 237.

Mr Findlay submitted that there was a clear error of law in the decision of the House of Lords in Swain v The Law Society and the significance of that non-citation was that it undermined the whole of the analysis of the decision of the Court of Appeal proceeded.

In That Trading, Lord Justice Millett had said (at p896) that there was nothing in the Solicitors Act 1974 which prohibited the charging of contingent fees. The Solicitors' Practice Rules 1990, by contrast, prohibited such a contingency fee should not enter into an arrangement to receive a contingency fee.

It was to be noted that the respondents appearing in That Trading had been cited in Swain v The Law Society. In Swain, Lord Diplock had said that the 1974 Act "imposed a number of statutory duties in relation to solicitors whether they are members of the Society or not ... It also conferred upon the Council of the Society ... the power to make rules and regulations having the effect of subordinate legislation under the Act."

MR JUSTICE KAY said that the applicant was granted political asylum from Iran in Sweden and came to the UK where he was convicted of drug offences and imprisoned.

A deportation order and directions for his removal from the UK to Sweden were made, however it appeared that the Swedish authorities would not permit him to return to Sweden because of his conviction.

The applicant was not permitted to work, and upon his release from prison sought assistance for accommodation from the council under section 21(1).

The council refused assistance on the ground that as the applicant was not lawfully present in the UK, he had not sought asylum in the UK to show that his removal to Sweden would not be to his benefit.

Mr Justice Kay so held in the Queen's Bench Division when granting an application by Rassoul Sarhang to quash the decision of the London Borough of Lambeth made in July 1998 not to make arrangements to provide him with housing as a person in need of care and attention under section 21(1) of the 1948 Act.

Mr Manji Gill and Mr Ranvij Khosla for the applicant; Mr Michael Stapperton, QC and Mr Peter Oldham for Lambeth.

Distinction between nature and degree of mental illness

Regina v Mental Health Review Tribunal for South Thames Region, Ex parte Smith
Before Mr Justice Popplewell
[Judgment August 4]
Where a mental health review tribunal determined under section 72(1)(b) of the Mental Health Act 1983 that a patient was suffering from a mental disorder of a nature, but not of a degree which made it appropriate for him to be liable to detention in a hospital, the tribunal should refuse to direct the discharge of the patient. It was not necessary that the disorder was both of such a nature and a degree.

Mr Justice Popplewell so held in the Queen's Bench Division when dismissing an application by Anthony Smith for judicial review of the decision of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for the South Thames Region, made on November 25, 1997 to refuse to discharge him conditionally from liability to be detained in hospital under section 72(1)(b) of the 1983 Act.

Section 72 of the 1983 Act provides: "(1) ... (b) the tribunal shall direct the discharge of a patient liable to be detained otherwise than under section 2 above if they are satisfied: (i) that he is not suffering from mental illness, psychopathic disorder, severe mental impairment or mental impairment or from any of those forms of disorder of a nature or degree which makes it appropriate for him to be liable to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment..."

Mr Paul Bowen for the applicant; Mr Rabinder Singh the respondent.

MR JUSTICE POPPLEWELL said that the applicant was subject to a restriction order under section 37 and 41 of the 1983 Act and diagnosed as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia.

When he applied to the tribunal for a conditional discharge he was presenting neither positive nor negative symptoms of the illness. The tribunal found that the mental disorder from which the applicant was suffering was of a nature but not of a degree which warrant-

ed his detention in a hospital and on that basis refused to discharge him.

The applicant argued that the phrase "nature or degree" was to be read conjunctively and that as his disorder was not of a degree warranting his detention, he ought to have been discharged.

His Lordship rejected that argument and said that the applicant had a chronic condition which was static, but the nature of it was that it might cease to be static. The degree of the condition was not relevant because it was static and stable.

There was a reason for the distinction in the 1983 Act between the words "nature" and "degree" as if the degree of the disorder alone had to also be considered, it would have been right to direct the discharge even though the nature of the condition was such that it was clear that he should not be discharged accordingly. The tribunal's decision was lawful.

Solicitors: Alexander & Partners Solicitors; Harlesden; Treasury Solicitor.

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POP

THE TIMES ARTS

CONCERT

Korean diva Sumi Jo at the Wigmore

PAGE 37



Prophet motive: Moses's mother sings a last, heartbroken lullaby before she casts her infant son adrift in a basket on the waters of the Nile in DreamWorks' biblical animated feature, *The Prince of Egypt*

Soaked in jollity

There are few film clips more famous than Gene Kelly splashing around in the title number of this popular 1952 musical. The water pressure in Culver City dropped so much during the making of the scene that the studio rainstorm was reduced to a trickle. At the Leicester Haymarket it is a tropical downpour in which, despite his exuberant hops, Gavin Lees performs with all the relish of a sodden carthorse. Nevertheless, Paul Kerryson's production is as polished as you could wish. It is 1927, the gala opening of Monumental Pictures' silent blockbuster, *The Royal Rascal*. But talking pictures are just around the corner and unless matinee

THEATRE

Singin' in the Rain Leicester

idols Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont prove they have bankable voices, their shelf life can be counted in days. With his deluxe tenor croon, it is clear that Lees's preppy Don can cut the mustard. And equally clear that Samantha George's wonderfully vulgar Lina has problems quite apart from her monstrous ego. With a voice that can shrivel eardrums at a thousand paces, she is Monumental's fatal liability and the comic making of Betty Comden and Adolph Green's classic adaptation.

It is hardly a *Spinal Tap* of the movie biz, but it has its moments. The black-and-white films that show the actors in badly dubbed 18th-century swashbucklers are delightfully Pythonesque, and designer Hugh Durrant even conjures a Buxby Berkeley staircase complete with Hollywood babes in towering head-dresses. But there is not a flicker of cynicism to impede the relentless jollity. Peter Edbrook's studio boss, R. F. Simpson, is far too amiable.

Despite spotless renditions of Arthur Freed's favourite songs from the 1920s and 1930s, the musical's greatness remains buried in the film. The most inspired sequence is a piece of choreography by David Needham, the *Broadway Melody* ballet, completely unrelated to the story.

If Lee and his dapper sidekick, Simon Coulthard, monopolise the best tunes, it is Helen Wray's enchanting Kathy Selsdon who has the voice of the evening. As the fall girl who has to dub Lina's splendidly awful voice and fall in love with Don, hers could be described as a thankless task. But you can feel the thrill with which the orchestra changes gear as she launches into *You Are My Lucky Star*. One of the few thrills of a remorselessly happy musical.

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

Is God ready for His close-up?

CINEMA: Hollywood has taken to religion in a big way. But, asks Sheila Johnston, is woolly New Age spirituality really the way to sell God in the 1990s?

It has become a cliché to speak of the end-of-millennium quest for spiritual values. And yet, in the consumer orgy that Christmas has become, the hardest task of all seems to be selling God. Take the example of *Jesus, My Boy*, a rare attempt to put the story of Christ on stage outside the confines of the school nativity play.

"It is based on the notion that Joseph was the first New Man," says the writer, comedian John Dowie. "One problem we had was that Jews and Christians might not want to come in case I took the micky and others won't because they think 'Bible, Church, Sunday school — humourless people telling stories in a bad way'. The solution was to get Tom Conti to perform it. The producers said, 'Without a star we can't sell it to anyone'."

Much more is at stake for *The Prince of Egypt*, an animated feature based on the Book of Exodus: it officially cost \$70 million (almost twice that, according to some sources). Produced by DreamWorks, the studio set up by Steven Spielberg, David Geffen and Jeffrey Katzenberg, it represents the latter's first foray into animation since he left

Disney in 1994 and has already been dubbed "The Zion King" in honour of his biggest hit there.

Whether *The Prince of Egypt* can replicate that success will become clear next week, when it opens worldwide, but the film-makers know they have a tough sell ahead. "My first reaction to the idea was, 'This is an animated Bible musical'," admits Simon Wells, one of the directors. "Why do I even want to see this movie, let alone spend four years of my life working on it?" The producers have, moreover, decided not to boost income with the usual flood of merchandise and fast-food franchise deals.

"There are no stuffed toys and no McDonald's Happy Meals," says Katzenberg. "We have a bigger agenda than simply making the most amount of money. We're trying to change 70 years of perception of what an animated movie is." Instead DreamWorks has concentrated on publishing and music, with more than 24 books and three soundtrack albums, which they hope will lend the film a more sophisticated adult appeal.

The Bible might have the great advantage of being out

of copyright, but publishers attempting to put a new spin on it face the question of taste. A new series of individual books of the Bible with prefaces by celebrities caused raised eyebrows because some of the authors were non-believers, while *The Tabloid Bible* (HarperCollins, £9.99) is a pastiche of *The Sun*, with a Page Three Girl (a multibreasted fertility goddess) and headlines such as "Will you listen to that flamin' bush!" or "Jesus has smelly feet!"

"The Bible contains a lot of sex, violence and sin, just like today's tabloids," says Nick Page, the author. "I have been a Christian for 20 years and didn't worry about causing offence. Besides, I think most Churches here are very open to innovation." But Page also concedes that this irreverent humour might not travel across the Atlantic: "In America there is more political and commercial power in the hands of the Church than over

here." A recent comic strip Bible had to remove Eve's nipples at the request of its American publisher. DreamWorks has taken no chances: it consulted nearly 700 religious advisers, from a pontifical council at the Vatican to the fundamentalist minister Jerry Falwell, and made numerous changes to *The Prince of Egypt* in response to their comments.

Wells jokes: "You get two rabbis in a room, and they come up with three opinions. We thought, 'This is going to be horrible: we're going to have hundreds of people with their own agendas telling us what to do.' But most of them were thrilled we were telling the story at all."

Wells cites Hollywood's favourite primer, Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With 1,000 Faces*, the book which purportedly inspired such films as the *Star Wars* cycle. "The tale of Moses has lasted for 3,000 years, not just because of its religious and spiritual significance, but also because it's an archetypal adventure story. Read Campbell's analysis of the mother myth and this fits right in." But critics believe that DreamWorks has become obsessed with anodyne political correctness. Eric Metaxas, the author of *The Prince of Egypt A to Z*, a children's book tied to the film, claimed that his publisher, the Christian inspirational imprint Tommy Nelson, was pressured by DreamWorks to remove all references to God as male. "We don't want to be politicised in how we portray God," responds Penny Finkelman Cox, one of the film's producers. "It was really unfortunate that he tried to do that. Different religious groups have different points of view and we respect them all." Yet sceptics maintain that *The Prince of Egypt* is simply the latest exam-

ple of what Metaxas has called Hollywood's "gloopy, meaningless spirituality".

Hollywood, of course, has always made religious films. But epics in the grand tradition — *The Ten Commandments*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* — fell from favour with the decline of the studio system, fizzling out ignominiously in such efforts as the 1980 Dudley Moore comedy *Wholly Moses!*

The rediscovery of higher values began in 1990 with *Ghost*, in which a woman's dead lover returns to protect her. It was a huge, unexpected hit, winning two Oscars, and since then a long cycle of films has explored the supernatural and the celestial. Opening here soon are *What Dreams May Come*, in which Robin Williams seeks his wife in the afterlife, and *Meet Joe Black*, with Death (Brad Pitt) coming to earth and falling in love.

Shirley MacLaine's forthcoming directorial debut, *Bruno*, is about a small boy who wants to be an angel. Even Eddie Murphy has got in on the act with *Holy Man*, in which he plays a religious guru who becomes the frontman for a home-shopping channel. These films tap into a woolly

New Age mysticism. But many feel they peddle a feel-good designer spirituality big on personal growth but reluctant to take on the laws, prohibitions and self-discipline of institutionalised religions.

Although *The Prince of Egypt* started life when Spielberg suggested filming the Ten Commandments, these are confined to an epilogue in the finished movie. "The first time you meet the adult Moses, he's not the guy with the stick, the tablets and the big robes being an icon and delivering the words of God. He's an 18-year-old kid joyriding in a chariot," Wells says. "The later Moses is boring. He's not a person you want to identify with."

But he denies that the film avoids the tough side of the character. "One of the first things I asked Jeffrey Katzenberg was, 'Does the slave driver whom Moses attacks die?' Because if he does, our character is a murderer. Are we going to kill thousands of children, slaughter the whole Egyptian Army? Yes we are."

● *Jesus, My Boy* opens at the Apollo, W1 (0171-494 5070) tomorrow. *The Prince of Egypt* is released on December 18

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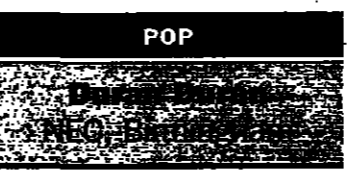
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LITERATURE

London's bookish festival

ARTS

RISING STAR

Actress Claudie Blakely

In March the capital will be taken over by the country's biggest literary festival. Nicolette Jones reports

The Word in your ear, London

We have never seen a literature festival on anything like this scale. From next March 19 to 28, The Word, the first annual London Festival of Literature, will bring us laser poems projected on to buildings, new literacy initiatives and hundreds of events. Cricket writing will be celebrated at Lord's, romantic fiction at Chelsea Register Office, crime writing at the Inner Temple, science fiction at the Science Museum and royal history at Hampton Court. The Tate Gallery will host a nine-day Children's Festival, the National Film Theatre will run a season of filmed books and writers' favourite films, the Cafe Royal will have a week of headline events about food and drink.

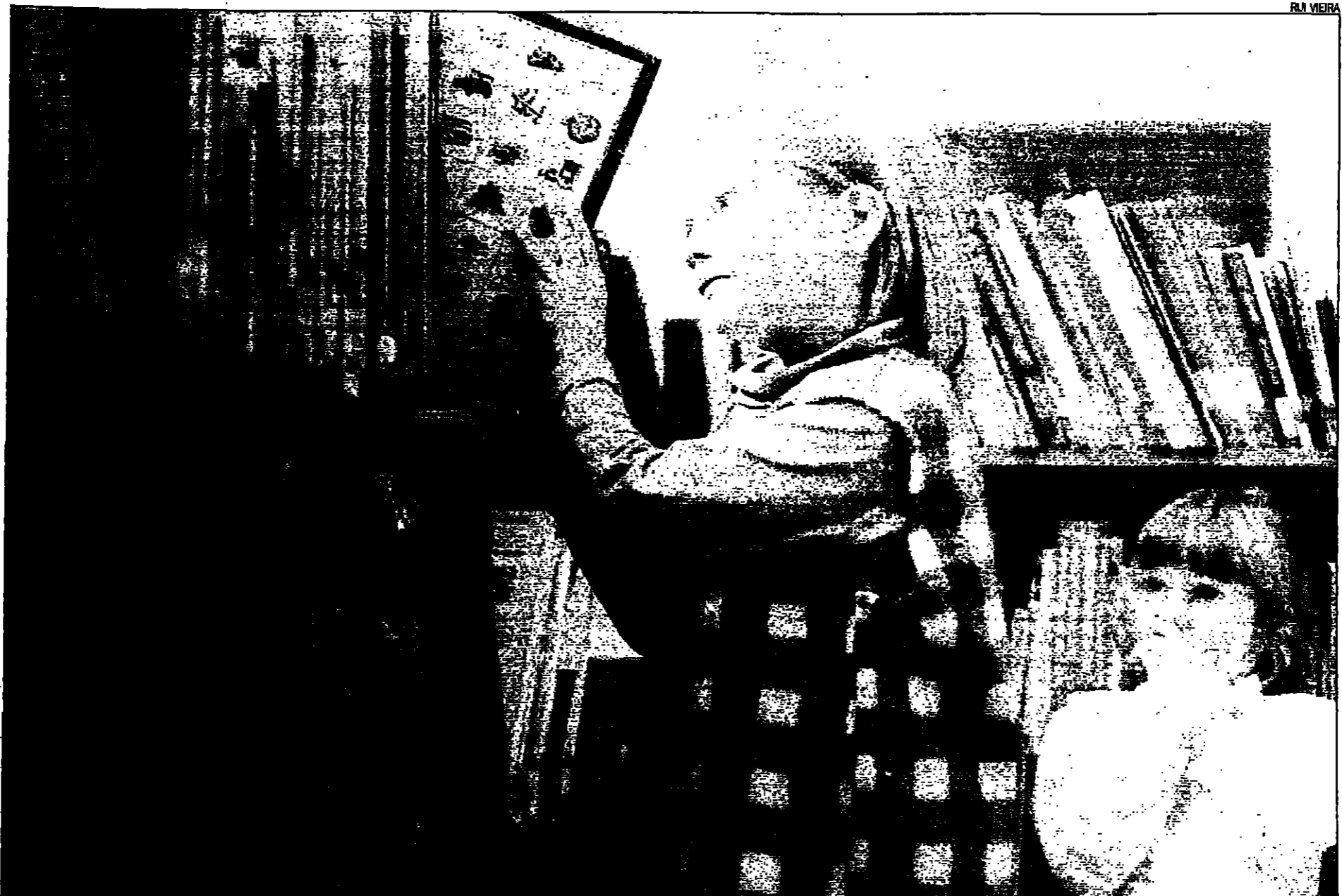
And there's more, much more. The Barbican will commission writers with music, the Roundhouse will involve poets and writers in music gigs and Fourth Estate publishers will launch a London anthology competition. *Granta* magazine will publish a London edition and distribute 15,000 extra copies free to sixth-formers attending five days of A-level and GCSE writers' conferences at Westminster Central Hall.

There will be platform conversations in West End theatres, a signaion at Olympia, lectures about London at Birkbeck College and seminars about cities and culture at the London School of Economics. There will be associated exhibitions at the British Library and the ICA, and the University of London will announce the winner of its sixth-form writing competition.

In pubs and bookshops, newspapers and supermarkets, Londoners will be invited to nominate their favourite piece of writing about where they live, and these submissions will be the basis of The Great Word Map of London, to be drawn by Quentin Blake, linking places with writers and titles, and eventually publicly and prominently displayed.

And these are only the peripheral events. At the core of the festival will be 66 writers from all over the world, two of whom will be "adopted" by each of London's boroughs (32 plus the City of London) to take part in four main events within that borough, and nurture a relationship with its inhabitants involving libraries, schools, arts centres and the Internet. They will also be commissioned to create new work, sometimes with artists working in other media, including video and club music. And every year, one of them, chosen by the other 65, will be honoured with the London Award.

The first 50 participants have just been announced. Sixteen already live in London and 13 are from elsewhere in the UK. Eight are based in



If London's children are not in love with reading by the end of next March, it won't be for want of trying. Libraries throughout the capital will be vitally involved in spreading The Word

America (although this includes residents who were originally foreigners, such as the Nigerian Chinua Achebe or the Chilean Ariel Dorfman). The remaining ten represent the wider world.

The list contains literary legends such as Margaret Atwood, Seamus Heaney, Joseph Heller, Doris Lessing, Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott; commercial writers such as Walter Mosley, Terry Pratchett, Wilbur Smith and Sue Townsend; and relative newcomers — Giles Foden, Tony Hanania, Robert McLiam Wilson and Amanda Foreman among them. It includes playwrights (Willy Russell, and the doyen of pantomimes Patrick Prior), poets (Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy, Michael Rosen), screenwriter Meera Syal, club musician Karl Hyde, children's authors (Shirley Hughes and Michael Hardcastle), biographers (Orlando Figes, Antonia Fraser, Richard Holmes) and other authors of non-fiction (Richard Dawkins, Germaine Greer, Ian Morris, Gitta Sereny). And, unusually, there are some participants who do

not originally write in English, such as Alice Vieira of Portugal and Edwar Al Kharrat of Egypt.

It was the London Arts Board which came up with the idea for the festival, but its driving force is now its director, Peter Florence, who established the Hay-on-Wye Literature Festival (which now attracts 40,000 visitors a year) in his own home town when he was just a young actor fresh out of Cambridge. Florence thinks big and has a genius for talking people into making his big ideas happen.

He wants the festival to be diverse and pluralistic, drawing from different media (press, screen, theatre and lyrics) as well as from books, and reflecting the cultural variety of London. As he says: "Orhan Pamuk means much more to a whole bunch of Turkish people in London than Martin Amis does." He wants The Word to launch new talents, and prides himself on spotting newcomers — Louis de Bernières, Arundhati Roy and Anne Michaels "had their first public gig at Hay," he says, "and look at them now." He

wants public libraries to install huge screens telling people what is happening at the festival around the city. He wants the media to commission work from the writers who are taking part (as the BBC did with poets on Radio 4 on National Poetry Day) and — in a typical flight of Florence's limitless enthusiasm — "get Nick Hornby to do football commentary..."

The phenomenal complexity of The Word has been a triumph of connection-making. The festival is "a celebration of something that London already does spectacularly well," and has tapped into separate organisations and structures that are already able to make things happen.

The festival's development manager, Louise Ansari, has spent her days cruising the metropolis and, according to Florence, "talking to people about what they are doing and what we can do to extend it." Many initiatives have taken off locally — Sutton, in southwest London, for instance, has organised hundreds of events of its

own — and The Word has provided the umbrella, the marketing push, the injection of writers.

It has also provided money, with media partnerships with Carlton TV, *Time Out* magazine and BBC Radio 4. There was a £200,000 grant from the National Lottery and, with

because the whole industry has been clobbered by the mismanagement of the Royal Opera House. We want to create a festival that is genuinely popular. We want to be the big positive news story for the arts of our day."

● Festival information on 071-837 2555

EFG Bank. The Word has founded a new association of arts sponsors willing to back the festival. Everyone, it seems, is on board.

The Word, says Florence, is "the complete inverse of the Dome and the Royal Opera House. People are so suspicious of the way culture is sold

Happy return

Recorded in one of Miles Davis's most productive periods, in 1958, *Porgy and Bess* proved such a commercial success that Columbia tried to persuade the trumpeter to repeat his collaboration with the arranger Gil Evans on the music from another hit show, *Doctor Dolittle*. "No way, José" was Davis's response; *Sketches of Spain* was to be the pair's only wholly satisfactory subsequent project, and their interpretation of Gershwin was never performed in its entirety, its score lost until last year, when it was unearthed in a New York warehouse.

The impact of the piece's introductory selection, *Buzzard Song*, was therefore considerable at *Porgy and Bess*'s first complete live performance in Britain, at the Barbican Hall. In the Guildhall Jazz Band, comprised of jazz and classical students, both the more straightforward jazz material and the delicate tone poems found subtle yet vigorous inter-

preters. Evans's trademark sonorities, using a combination of three french horns and tuba with muted trombones, or piquant mixes of flutes and muted trumpets, were reproduced with great accuracy.

It was the American trumpeter Randy Brecker, however, who was the main focus of attention. Eschewing the softer-toned flugelhorn in favour of open trumpet, he did not attempt to reproduce the haunting, vulnerable sound of the original. Instead, he used his more robust approach to great effect on garrulous visits to *Summertime* and *It Ain't Necessarily So*, and played the piece's most adventurous arrangements, *Prayer (Oh Doctor Jesus)* and *Here Come de Honey Man*, and the opera's celebrated ballads with restrained power and elegance.

This concert was a triumph for Scott Stroman's students and for Brecker, but most important, it helped to establish a true jazz classic in the music's live repertoire.

CHRIS PARKER

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CLAUDIE BLAKELY

Profession: Actress
Age: 23

Three's company: She is a key member of the Ian McKellen/Jude Kelly ensemble at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. The first of her three starring parts was Nina in *The Seagull* in November, with one critic singling out hers, not McKellen's Dr Dorn, as the outstanding performance.

Her first Noël: She opens in Coward's *Present Laughter* at the Playhouse next Wednesday as Daphne Sillington, "the debutante who's desperate to get in with the 'in' crowd". Miranda in *The Tempest* follows in January. "I'm determined not to play her as the usual long-haired, sweet and wafy girl."

A mentor within the company? McKellen. "I constantly look to him for answers to my acting questions." Add their Wendy/Captain Hook partnership in the National's *Peter Pan* to the Playhouse season and they will soon have acted together more than 150 times. "That's amazing, because it's not so long since I was watching him in *Richard III*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Othello*."

Rock'n'roll childhood: Her late father, Alan, played rhythm guitar in the Tremeloes, a band who enjoyed a string of Top Ten hits in the Sixties. When she was growing up, various pop luminaries were guests in the family's Surrey home. "Elton John was a big part of my childhood."

Her father's voice: She inherited Alan's distinctive, smoky tones. "When I was at the Central School of Drama, I was told, 'You're never going to make it unless you smooth out your voice'. But apart from the fact that I lose my voice very easily, I now see it as an asset. One critic said I sounded like Judi Dench, which is great, although I think I sounded like Chris Rea."

Criminal record: She has picked up a handful of television parts, including "an 18-year-old druggie down-and-out" who has her collar felt by Robson Greene in *Touching Evil*.

Loyal intent: "Obviously I would not say no to film work, but I never want to stop doing classical theatre."

DANIEL ROSENTHAL



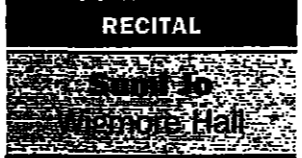
Right tools for the wrong job

Sumi Jo's return to London was greeted by "house full" signs, a sure indication of the coloratura soprano's following. This popularity has led to the small-town Korean diva appearing at some of the world's largest opera houses, and, inevitably, in such big barns she can come across as little more than a pretty voice. Hopes that in the intimacy of the Wigmore Hall she would reveal deeper interpretative powers were dashed by this largely one-dimensional recital.

Her varied programme looked promising but, ironically, was delivered with very little variety. Thirteen composers, plus those featured in her encores, ought to have made for a many-sided evening, and with a little more thought to matters such as contrasting keys in consecutive pieces some monotony might have been avoided. Ultimately, though, the problem seems to be a generalised delivery which fights shy of emotional highs and lows, because her crystal-like voice has undeniable brightness and beauty.

It might have been possible to blame the repertoire, since some of the flighty coloratura numbers ought to have been relegated to encores. Still, there is more to Johann Strauss than she found in *Wo die Zitronen blühen*, even to the *arie antiche* which she turned out so immaculately.

JOHN ALLISON



RECITAL

It was the serious composers who showed up her limitations most. *Da tempeste* from *Giulio Cesare* revealed some trouble with intonation, and though *Lascia ch'io pianga* (*Rinaldo*) was effective for its daring slowness, both arias sounded lightweight by Handelian standards. In Schubert, she missed the dark side of *Heidenröslein*, concentrating on its simple tunefulness, while a beautifully floated line "Du bist die Ruh" was not enough where words and music are equally important. At the piano, Jeff Cohen offered good support, and Sumi Jo's failure to respond suggests that she is not a natural leader singer.

But this recital proved what has always seemed to be the case: she is best in 19th-century French repertoire. She was affecting in Duparc's *Chanson triste*, caught all the charm of Gounod's *Sérénade*, and sang Delibes' *Chanson espagnole* with cheeky insouciance. With fine French and a real feeling for the style, it is a pity she does not concentrate more on this enjoyable music.

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The sailing community of the South West is an irresistible lure for business people seeking to downsize. Fred Redwood reports

High-flyers get taste for Cornish cream

The chill winds of a recession have been felt in the City in the past few months. Only recently Merrill Lynch, the American investment bank, was forced to make redundant 400 of its London-based staff. Many market analysts think it is a sign of worse things to come.

Jon Robinson, head of research for the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union, says: "We fear that the trend will be for more job losses as the crisis in world markets kicks in, together with the problems in Russia, the Far East and the derivatives fiasco."

The effect on the property market has already been dramatic and there are signs that City workers are selling in town in the expectation of prices tumbling.

With the added hope of finding a more leisurely way of life, an increasing number of people are now "downsizing" and moving to the country.

In Cornwall, for example, the sailing communities are an irresistible attraction for those who suddenly have the opportunity to quit their day job. Sam Weller, area

'Our harbour towns are now full of people who work part-time on a consultancy basis'

sales manager with General Accident Property Services (GA), describes the phenomenon.

"We receive countless inquiries from people who want to sell a valuable house in or around London and put their money into a boat and a harbourside apartment," he says.

"The new technology ensures that this doesn't necessarily mean a complete severance from the world of work."

"Cornish harbour towns are now full of people who work from home on a part-time consultancy basis. But the real hub of their lifestyle is sailing."

For anyone considering following the lead of Cornwall's sailing fanatics, ideal properties can be found in an apartment development on Cliff Road in Falmouth.

A number are on the market and Seabank is typical. A two-bedroom, ground-floor apartment, Seabank has spectacular views across Falmouth Bay.

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David and Sarah Mansfield are downsizing; they are selling their five-bedroom house in Nottinghamshire for a smaller home in Cornwall

bour and the lawned communal gardens are an added feature. The property has an asking price of £19,950 and it is with the GA Falmouth office (01326 316362).

Apart from sailing, Cornwall is traditionally sought-after by walkers and incomers seeking to live the "good life" on one of the reasonably priced smallholdings that regularly appear on the market.

However, Mr Weller advises

against holding over-romantic illusions of life in the country. He says: "Between 50 and 60 per cent of people who move to Cornwall return to their rooms within five years — the tug of family commitments being stronger than the lure of the sea and the scenery."

"With this in mind, buyers would be wise to buy properties which are likely to retain their value. They should also ensure that

they are able to cope with the upkeep. It would be tragic to be stuck in one of our more remote areas, unable to sell," he says.

Reasonably priced properties are abundant in Cornwall. At Porth, near Newquay, for example, £134,500 buys a five-bedroom house, with a swimming pool, two garages and a summer house.

The shops in Newquay are just a mile away and Porth beach is only

yards along the road. The property is with Black Horse's Newquay office (01637 876275).

Anyone who wants to get closer to a community may be interested in 26 Bishop's Close, Truro. This is a modern, two-bedroom bungalow situated at the end of a cul-de-sac within walking distance of Truro's centre. It is on the books of GA's Truro office for £94,950 (01872 27451).



The Mansfields' cottage in Cornwall. Below: sailing on the Helford



CASE STUDY: DAVID AND SARAH MANSFIELD

IT is not only the London-based who have the opportunity to swap work for active early retirement. For David Mansfield from Nottingham, "downsizing" was the obvious solution when he gave up his business life in his early fifties. Mr Mansfield found that the family home was preventing him from enjoying his newfound freedom.

He says: "We have a five-bedroom Edwardian home set in an acre of grounds. My wife and I are very active; we play golf and travel abroad a good deal."

"But the last time we saw the gardens after a trip overseas we were dismayed. It took us weeks to put the grounds in order and it quite detracted from the pleasure of our holiday."

The Mansfields' solution to the problem was to sell the family home and downsize. They intend to spend part of their time at an inherited cottage in Cornwall close to the ferry port at Plymouth, thus allowing them easy access to Europe. As a replacement for their substantial Nottingham home they are looking for a much smaller house or apartment in the area. The Mansfields have as yet found nothing to their taste.

Buyers in a similar predicament, however, may be interested in sites such as Park View in Wel-

borough, Northamptonshire. A series of Grade II listed buildings have been developed into quality apartments and penthouses. Attractive features include brick vaulted ceilings and exposed beams. One-bedroom apartments start at £55,000 and the two-bedroom type, with mezzanine, cost £90,000.

Park View extends for two acres and is well situated for the town centre and the Castle Theatre, two minutes' walk away. The properties are being sold by Woolwich Property Services (01933 233555), where the site agent, Eileen Regan, reports that a high proportion of buyers have been active. "Young" retired people.

Downsizing seems the logical solution if you have a property that is too big for your needs. Less maintenance and a cash payoff after the sale should amount to happiness. However, downsizers should also consider the emotional attachment that they may have forged — Mr Mansfield dreads the day he moves.

He says: "I remember the day we moved in here 15 years ago. I found the previous owner at the end of the garden, sobbing. I really didn't know why. After bringing up a family here, I understand his feelings all too well. Leaving this house will be a terrible wrench."

Badge of heritage or monstrous carbuncle?

Putting a plaque on your listed home could upset local planners, says Rachel Kelly

Some brag about their golf handicap, others that they live in a listed building. But the latter need not crown their pride; instead the proud owner can simply attach an English Listed Property plaque, ten inches in diameter, to the wall of his home.

The plaques are made of resin with a lead pigment and are being marketed to the country's 500,000 owners of listed buildings as a sign "that they care about their home."

About 1,500 of the plaques have been sold by the Listed Property Owners' Club, a group of 2,000 historic buildings enthusiasts who pay £24 a year to receive information and a newsletter.

But conservationists and planners are not so enthusiastic about the trend. Tony Crouch, a conservation officer for Bath and North East Somerset Council, which has about 5,000 listed buildings under its stewardship, says: "The whole point of listing is to try to keep the character of these buildings. The architecture should speak for itself. Do plaques add to the architectural or historic interest of these buildings? No."

Bill Stewart, a planning officer with Westmains council, says: "The main facade of a listed building is especially sensitive. Cumulatively, these plaques could have a very poor effect on townscapes."

English Heritage, which administers the blue plaque scheme recording where famous people have lived in London, says: "We don't see the purpose of these plaques. They don't tell you anything you can't already see from looking at the building."

But others are more relaxed. Michael Haslam, the chief planning officer of South Norfolk District Council, says: "If you look at the view that these plaques needed listed building consent, the extra work would be enormous. You have to apply the rules with an element of pragmatism."

Peter Anslow, from the Listed Property Owners' Club, says: "These are not offensive; quite the reverse. They are the mark of a caring owner."

Mr Anslow says that 94 per cent of listed buildings are not exceptional Grade I houses but Grade II properties, and that the plaques will not change their character. Some 4 per cent of properties in Britain are Grade II listed.

"Being listed adds to a property's value," Mr Anslow says. "People talk of listing rather as they might talk about a golf handicap."

There is an honourable tradition to the practice of attaching plaques to buildings. Insurance companies used to mark houses with their plaques so that if a property were to catch fire, the company's fire bri-



Peter Hooper outside his listed Kent farmhouse, and (below) the plaque he bought for it

gade would know that it was covered — and put the fire out.

Mr Anslow adds that most plaques have been sold to the owners of country houses, so they are seen by few people. But he admits that this would not be the case if a property were sited on a main road.

Martin Anslow, his son, says: "People are quite proud to live in historic buildings and, yes, there is a bit of snobbery. But owners also have to put a lot of effort into living in these buildings. They want to show that off."

Technically, the owners of listed properties need to apply for listed building consent to do anything to their homes which might affect the character of the buildings. But many owners who have bought plaques are thought not to have applied for permission, as they believe that the plaques are too insignificant to require consent.

Dave Morton, from the Royal Town Planning Institute, says: "To be on the safe side,



owners should discuss the need for consent. Some councils will decide that they do need consent and will grant it; others will decide that owners do not need consent. It is up to the council."

Martin Anslow advises Listed Property Owners' Club members to be considerate when choosing where to hang the plaque. If necessary, it could be placed indoors.

Peter Hooper, a semi-retired architect from Hartlip, Kent, who has attached a plaque to his Grade II listed farmhouse, says: "I have put the plaque on the front corner of the house, facing the road, so the house can be identified as part of our

heritage." Mr Hooper did not seek consent from Swale District Council, but he says: "The plaque is only screwed on, so it could be removed. But I can't see that they would want it removed."

He denies that there is any element of plaque one-upmanship with his neighbours. "I am not snobbish about it. It is just something I love," he says.

"I have an empathy with old buildings. Too many buildings are not identified as part of our heritage, and we have a wealth of historic properties in Kent. It is of interest to passing visitors." He says he has had no complaints from his neighbours.

The Listed Property Owners' Club says that the plaque has been created to celebrate its owners' "justifiable pride of ownership", and that it "employs ancient and modern materials to produce an aged lead finish of singular character".

The plaque's "discreet antique appearance", it says, "is sympathetic to all styles".

Up West, the best is yet to slump

Homebuyers nervous about approaching recession are preferring to buy modernised property which needs no work rather than risk extra bills on run-down homes.

Painters Yard, Chelsea, a development which claims to have captured the spirit of the 19th-century riverside village inhabited by such artistic notables as Turner and Whistler, is selling well.

To the astonishment of FPD Savills, the property consultants, 19 flats and three houses sold within six weeks of being put on the market in September, at prices ranging from £435,000 to £2.5 million. The quality of the conversion — by the architect John Simpson, renowned for the Prince of Wales's Poundbury village, and the developer Richard Collins — appears to have been the deciding factor.

Volanda Barnes, the director of residential research at FPD Savills, emphasises that apart from its prime location, the high-quality design and finish were major selling points.

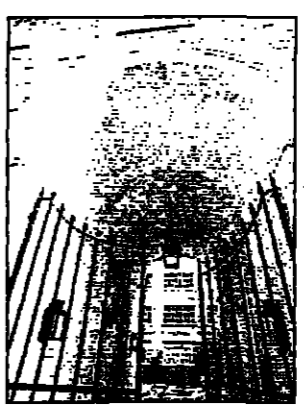
"Richard Collins has always paid enormous attention to detail," she says. "This would not have been so critical in the past, when a lot of developers tried to get away with lower specifications. But the rate of sale has halved in some places, and larger sites are putting people off."

She adds: "In 1997, buyers felt pressured to buy — they were in competition with other buyers. Now there are fewer buyers and they are more discerning."

"In London there is a move, too, towards the UK purchaser rather than overseas investors. Eighteen months ago it would have been customers from Hong Kong or Singapore, but they disappeared in September 1997."

Mr Collins was also surprised at the quick sales. "I have never had a response like this before," he says. "We did four out of 12 flats in the warehouse as show flats, using four

Top flats are still selling, says Jackie Williams



Striking archway entrance

different designers, ready for buyers to move into."

He is clearly pleased with the eclectic effect achieved by items bought individually in Paris, Rome or Florence which add colour to the decor.

"We have brought items from all over Europe, such as the 19th-century lantern under the arch and an oval mask on the terrace which acts as a fountain for the watercourse," he says.

"We also used old French materials and photographs that I bought in Paris for the show flats. We combined these with materials bought locally in the King's Road for a mixture of old and new."

The most striking feature of

the development is an 18ft, double-storey stone arch adorned with the French lantern, and large iron gates which lead to an Italianate piazza. Builder's yards have been transformed into a terrace complete with fountain, cascades and a watercourse.

Visitors are treated to the soothing splash of water running from the oval mask fountain to the lower terrace. Magnolia, fig and 100-year-old olive trees stand in solid lead containers on ornate paving. Wall lanterns are used to good effect, and hand-made Sussex bricks have been used for the surrounding houses and flats.

The development fronts Old Church Street, which winds down from the King's Road to Thomas More's church by the Thames.

Willy Gessing, from the buyer agent Property Vision, says: "It's striking that the houses that are failing to sell at the moment are nearly all unmodernised. Buyers do not wish to be saddled with huge extra bills in uncertain times."

Savills's John Vaughan emphasises that buyers are still seeking properties of superior quality. The latest figures show that the top end of the market has grown fastest, despite fears of a recession.

In spite of an overall drop in sales of 8.52 per cent between July and September 1998 compared with the previous year, sales of properties costing between £1 million and £1.5 million rose by 20 per cent in the same period, and sales of properties over £2 million increased by 45 per cent.

Magnolia, fig and olive trees were used to landscape the site



Magnolia, fig and olive trees were used to landscape the site

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Crème de la Crème

Unflappable Lorna is Receptionist of the Year



Lorna Ewin: desk dynamo

Lorna Ewin is a terrific receptionist and "you can't have her phone number - I don't want other firms stealing her". So says Laurel Harbour, senior partner of Shook, Hardy and Bacon's 40-strong team of London lawyers, for whom Lorna's reception desk in the Carlisle Place office is an anchor and a centre of excellence.

So good, in fact, that Lorna has become the first winner of The Times/Dial-a-Cab City Receptionist of the Year award, and will soon be enjoying her prize of a weekend in Paris for two. The award, for which Crème de la Crème readers nominated candidates, is designed to recognise the vital role of receptionists - a job which is particularly important for firms such as Dial-a-Cab, the largest taxi company in Central London.

Angels, and Brian Rice, chairman of Dial-a-Cab. As well as handling the switchboard, Lorna organises legal conferences and seminars, books meeting rooms, restaurants and flights, reconciles bills for stationery and cabs, and even organises the firm's Christmas party. A trained secretary, she formerly worked for the Conran organisation.

They were certainly shared by our runners-up, Lynda Hilliard, of Gray's Security, hails the ITN reception desk in Gray's Inn Road, Central London, with the aplomb born of 16 years' experience. She is unfazed by royalty or TV stars, and knows the building well enough to pinpoint "someone called Karen" from among its 16 compartments. Nicola Murphy's quick reactions, her natural, friendly manner and her skill with a switchboard have made her invaluable to Malcolm Hollis, surveyors, in Battersea, southwest London.

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M & C Saatchi's winning reception area

PETER BROWN

TIME-SAVERS
HERE'S a really sneaky tip on how to superimpose text over a picture in Word. Insert a picture, then create a text box by clicking on Insert/Text Box. You can drag the text box over the picture but, by default, it will hide part of it. However, if you do this and then click on Format/Text Box/Colors and Lines, then check the Semitransparent box and click OK, the picture under the text box will now show through in - surprise, surprise! - a semi-transparent fashion.

Sorting Santa's postbag
It is now postal peak-hour, says Jennai Cox
Since he claims to be in regular contact with the yuletide gift-giver, Ray Kennedy can expect from his nine-year-old daughter more questions about Father Christmas than the average child levels at a parent. In the run-up to December 25, his job at the Royal Mail is completely transformed as he heads a team of 300 to sort through and forward the 750,000 letters comprising "Santa's postbag".

Man of letters: Ray Kennedy loves handling Santa's mail
Mr Kennedy, who joined the Royal Mail as a postman 26 years ago, graduated from a bicycle to the counter, then finance, personnel and planning. He specialised in computers after completing a degree and, in the 1980s, got his first management position. He was appointed head of the Return Letters Department in Belfast two years ago with a seasonal responsibility to assist Father Christmas with his post.

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Moran proves secret weapon for Light Blues as Oxford's late rally proves in vain Cambridge give rivals harsh lesson

CAMBRIDGE OXFORD
16 12
By David Hands
Rugby Correspondent

FAVOURITISM has been a poisoned chalice at Twickenham these past few days. South Africa could not survive it last Saturday and nor could Oxford University yesterday, though if there is one occasion when form goes out of the window, it is the University match.

The 117th staging of the event left Cambridge deserved winners for the 56th time, their retention of the Bowring Bowl for the fifth successive year equalling the achievements of their predecessors of 1972-76 and 1980-84. That they did so owed much to the coherence of their back row and mid-field, areas in which Oxford failed utterly to match.

The Light Blues always knew that they had a match-winning combination in the centre, where the two Marks, Denney and Robinson, vied for a notional "most valued player" award, but the unknown quantity was fly half Paul Moran, a product of Auckland Grammar School, is one of four players to have occupied the No 10 jersey this term and came good when it most mattered: his tactical kicking allowed Cambridge to dominate the game territorially.

Moran, though, would be the first to pay tribute to the work of his forwards. Henry Whitford, in particular, set a magnificent example of driving play from No 8. He had the priceless capacity to turn indifferent possession into good ball, setting a platform for the Innes brothers, Hamish and Angus, to make raids into Oxford ranks.

"We thought they only had plan A, which was to take it up



The Innes brothers, Angus and Hamish, centre, hug each other after Cambridge University's narrow defeat of Oxford at Twickenham yesterday. Photograph: Hugh Routledge

through the forwards, a pivotal scrum half and two quick wings." Tony Rodgers, the Cambridge coach, said: "We thought that if we could nullify them there, we were in with a chance."

Rodgers had ample reason for pride in any case as it was his son, Stefan, who scored his team's second try and provided the impetus in the second half that Cambridge sustained. Oxford might have known it was not to be their day when, 24 hours before the start, they were forced to tamper with their back-five forwards.

A scan showed that Adam Russell, their American lock, had suffered a stress fracture of the fibula and Mark Challenger moved up from No 8

with Takuro Miuchi winning an unexpected Blue. With the rain pouring steadily down during the first half, Cambridge adapted to the conditions with aplomb. They shrugged off an early try and carried the game to Oxford be-

lieving that a similar chapter of accidents would not recur: Moran's cross-kick fell to Nick Booth who chipped ahead and Robinson, covering across, could not hold the ball. Booth kicked on and beat Morrow to the touch though his conver-

sion flew wide. Cambridge cured themselves of the habit of committing too many players to the ruck and maul, but had to wait until six minutes from the interval before Denney put them level. Whitford's pass from a scrum caught the

centre on an arcing run that carried him past two defenders into the corner. "As a pair, Denney and Robinson would grace any Premiership side," Steve Hill, the Oxford coach, acknowledged gracefully and the two centres proceeded to show why with absolute clarity. They worked superbly off each other, in attack and defence, and only six minutes after half-time, Denney provided the inside pass that wrestled his way to the line for Cambridge's second try.

That was the groundwork upon which Moran proceeded to build a winning margin. His conversion and two penalty goals, both awarded when Oxford played the ball at a ruck, won Cambridge the

game. More than that, the fly half turned the defence in masterly fashion, ensuring that Oxford's hopes of releasing their wings lay dormant for much of the match.

Only ten minutes remained when Oxford established themselves in the opposing 22. Andy Roberts won the lineout and Oxford drove a protracted maul forward; when Richard Gomeroy released a perfect inside pass to his blind-side wing, Nick Humphries was over the line without a hand laid on him for the best score of the game. It inspired his colleagues to launch a final, desperate assault but Cambridge held firm and knew precisely where to eke out the final seconds of the game — deep in the Oxford half.

FULL SCORING DETAILS AND TEAMS FROM TWICKENHAM

SCORERS: Oxford University: Three: Booth (6min), Humphries (70). Cambridge: University: Three: Denney (34), Rodgers (48). Conversion: Moran. Penalty goals: Moran 2 (55, 67).

SCORING SEQUENCE (Oxford first): 5-0, 5-5 (half-time), 5-10, 5-13, 5-18, 12-15.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY: R Woodbine (Pine Edward VII, Lytham and St Edmund Hall), N Booth (Lynham St Anne's HS and Worcester), N Ashley (Newington College, Sydney and Lewes), K Silvester (Thomas S Woodson HS, Rockville and Templeton), N Humphries (Bosworth Boys HS, Sydney and St Anne's), R Gomeroy (Congres Wood College, Kidder and St

Edmund Hall), S Berry (The Southport School, Gold Coast and St Cross), A Collins (Plymouth (St) and Looe), B O'Connor (Marist Brothers College, Canberra and St Edmund Hall), A Russell (Sohull and University), A Roberts (Kempston College and New College), M Challenger (Darlington College, Carlisle and St Anne's), M Blatch (Yarlets HS, Fukuoka and Meneford).

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY: R Morrow (Royal School, Durgamun and Hughes Hall), A Richard (Ephton College and Hughes Hall), M Robinson (Oprate HS and Hughes Hall), M Denney (Bedford Modern and St Edmund's), S Lippard (Portland (St) and Corva Crest), P Moran (Auckland GS and Hughes Hall), G Paoletti (St Paul's College, Shrewsbury and Hughes Hall), M Forde (Christ's College, Canterbury and Sidney Sussex, Cambridge), C Hart (St Joseph's College, Nudgee and Hughes Hall), H Innes (St Joseph's College, Brisbane and Hughes Hall), A Innes (St Joseph's College, Brisbane and Hughes Hall), D Slack (Bedford and St Edmund's), T Woodson (Swatland HS and St Edmund's), M Haslett (Royal Academy, Belfast and St Catherine's), H Whitford (The Leys and Hughes Hall), R Whittaker (E Monson (Bristol).

Traditional fervour lends annual day a unique appeal

It is a coincidence that both this year and last, the historic contest between Oxford and Cambridge should fall three days after pulsating games involving England on the same pitch. After the thrilling moments when England's defeat of South Africa put a smile on the face of a nation, it was asking a bit much to expect more of the same at Twickenham yesterday.

On Saturday the leading players from England and South Africa, players and teams with an eye on the World Cup next year, gave an enthralling display. Yesterday it was the turn of students, some undergraduates, some postgraduates, some of whom will go on to make their mark at rugby, some in medicine, the law, the civil service.

It would seem to be comparing

John Hopkins says the Varsity match may not contain the class of the big international encounters, but it has value all the same

apples and pears to draw comparisons between the two games. Or is it? What is the appeal of the Varsity match? How good is the skill level? Is the match keeping pace with the rising standards in the game? In short, is it worth the candle?

The answer is that it is, probably. What we saw through the encircling gloom that accompanied a biting cold was two teams attempting to play an enlightened rugby, keeping the ball in hand whenever they could, keeping it in play for as long as possible, showing a desire to run with it. It was international rugby writ small, very small even, but

when to this is added the fervour that is always generated by a tribal rite such as the Varsity match, it becomes clear why the crowd this year was the second-best in the history of the event and that of last year was the best.

"Let us not pretend that Varsity match rugby is international rugby," Matt Foulds, the Cambridge captain, who comes from New Zealand, said. "We have a handful of players who are up to international standards but the majority are competent players who are multidisciplinary in being able to study at two of the finest institutions in England."

When was the last really dire Varsity match, the sort of 3-6 victory when two packs of forwards lumbered into one another, passes were knocked on in the fumbling enthusiasm and hardly anybody attended? Probably 1974. The games since have got better and better, and though the most recent Varsity matches have not reached the high level of technical skills demonstrated by those Cambridge sides of the late Seventies and early Eighties, they are far removed from those turgid, low-scoring games of 30 years ago.

It is not just international rugby with which the Varsity match is com-

pared. There is also the Premiership in which there are some pretty awful games even now. Mark Denney, formerly contracted to Wasps and the scorer of a magnificent try for Cambridge, is perfectly positioned to compare standards, commitment, the levels of skills.

"League rugby, week in and week out, the emotions are very different," Denney said. "The Varsity match is a one-off. The emotions are very draining. Premiership rugby is more skilful, but in terms of interest and physicality this is second to none."

Certainly, as the 62,000 spectators wound their way home last night, there was a feeling that another set piece in rugby's calendar had come and gone successfully. The occasion will and should continue at Twickenham for a while yet.



The emotions are draining: Angus Innes celebrates

BOWLS Champion's choice no aid to Scots

THE withdrawal of Margaret Letham from the British Isles indoor singles championship, which will be played in Belfast next March, has highlighted a bitter row between the women's national indoor and outdoor associations.

Muriel Old, the Scottish indoor secretary, said yesterday: "The outdoor associations have scheduled an international event, the Atlantic Rim Games, in Cape Town, to clash with the home international indoor series and have placed players in an invidious position."

Letham, of Blantyre, who qualified for the British event when she won the Scottish singles title for the third time last week, played on in her national championship even though she knew she would not be going to Belfast.

She had already accepted an invitation to represent Scotland in Cape Town and will be leaving the day that the British championships get under way.

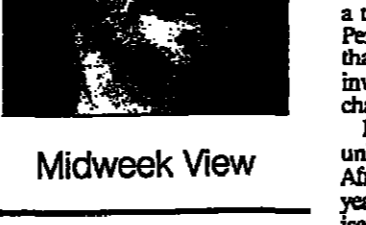
Only national champions are allowed to compete for British titles, and, although replacements are allowed in team events, no substitution is permitted in singles, so Scotland will not be represented in Belfast. "It's not my fault that there is a clash between these two events," Letham said yesterday.

Of the 20 players who are bound for South Africa, 16 were certain to be picked for their countries' indoor teams: five from England, four apiece from Ireland and Wales and three from Scotland.

South Africa should heed wake-up call

LAST Saturday, England played South Africa at rugby union. The decisive score was made by the only — stand by for a ludicrous phrase — player of colour on the pitch. This was Jeremy Guscott and he was playing for England rather than South Africa. Which is odd when you come to think about it, but there's nowt so queer as history.

A couple of weeks ago West Indies played South Africa at cricket. The West Indies team contained 11 players of colour, people with ethnic roots in the Indian sub-continent or the west coast of Africa. The actual South Africa side contained 11 players not of colour, pinko-grey types with ethnic roots in England or The Netherlands.



Midweek View

This is also pretty odd, especially as not so long ago West Indies invariably lined up without any players of colour at all. And very recently in historical terms, after it had become acceptable for West Indies to include players of colour, it was still essential that the actual captain was pinko-grey.

Now the optimistically named United Cricket Board of South Africa has come up with a startling scheme. It has introduced a committee with the power of overruling the selectors. Its job is to make sure that black players get selected for the national side.

There is a still more radical move in South African provincial cricket. The provinces have been instructed to include players of colour. If the province has not got any decent ones of its own, then it must borrow them from a central pool to be established by the board.

Now one's first reaction is a sort of disquiet at this. To include a lesser player because of his colour

seems to be a basic denial of sport, which is, after all, supposed to be about the pursuit of excellence. However, there is also the point that throughout history, again and again, greater players have been excluded because of their colour. It has been going on for years and, of course, it still goes on.

And you can say what you like about positive discrimination, but it beats the hell out of negative discrimination.

But this latest happening in South African sport does strike a jarring note. We were happy — at the quite extraordinary degree of all-rightness that seems to have been created with such speed in South African sport, symptomatic, we devoutly hoped, of a basic all-rightness in South African society. After all, Nelson Mandela turned up to the final of the rugby union World Cup in South Africa wearing a Springbok shirt that bore the name and number of the captain, Francois Pienaar, an Afrikaner.

It was a moment of glorious symbolism. But one wonderful gesture does not make for everlasting peace and happiness, as any married person knows. Peacemaking is a continuous process: it cannot stop. Or if it does, it becomes conflict.

Perhaps, like outsiders — like the outsiders they truly are, in fact — the white South African sporting establishment assumed a too easy, a too great degree of all-rightness. Perhaps all white South Africa did that. The fact is that the country is involved in a process of continuous change.

Like all other countries. But unlike all other countries, South Africa has just emerged from 45 years of a system of institutionalised injustice. You do not laugh this off with a beer and a jolly good ball game, no matter what colour your skin.

No, this positive discrimination business is a sporting and, by implication, political wake-up call. The South African Rugby Football Union would do especially well to heed it. So would many other white-dominated organisations in the country.

Politics and sport again: but we surely now all accept that international sport is an overly political act. In South Africa, the end of apartheid was brought about by the sporting boycott and the great moment of rapprochement took place at that rugby union World Cup final.

Sport has been a great vehicle for change in South Africa and sport should be proud of that. But the trouble with history is that it just keeps on happening.

Paul Adams, the famous inside out, left-arm bowler, may play for



Guscott's try for England was significant as well as decisive.

South Africa in the next Test. It seems certain that Herschelle Gibbs will do so. Both are players of colour. A vile phrase, as I think I said. But still, in South Africa, a relevant one, it seems.

I look forward to a time when such phrases are no longer needed, to a time when, as these phrases are recalled, they provoke not incredulity but hilarity. Till then, it is nice that the phrase "player of colour" is used for compulsory inclusion. Instead of the reverse.

Leicester must do without Stransky

BY MARK SOUSTER

LEICESTERS' hopes of winning the Allied Dunbar Premiership received a severe setback yesterday when it was revealed that Joel Stransky, their influential former South Africa fly half, will probably miss their next three league games and not play again until the new year.

Stransky, 31, damaged knee ligaments during the 22-16 defeat by the Fijians last Thursday and will definitely miss the match against Newcastle, the champions, at Welford Road on Saturday.

Leicester, who lead the first division on points difference from Northampton, then play Gloucester and Bedford before the traditional Barbarians fixture on December 29. Pat Howard, who has played at fly half for Australia, will switch from centre.

Fritz van Heerden, the Leicester lock and a compatriot of Stransky, continues his rehabilitation after a lengthy absence with a toe injury by playing in a second XV match against Gloucester tonight, which will feature 11 internationals.

Van Heerden is one of six in the Leicester team, the others being Tim Stimpson, Stuart Potter, who has not played since October 11, David Loughhead, Craig Joiner and Graham Centre, who has been with England for a month. Gloucester parade five: Phil Vickery, the England prop, who has not played for two months because of a neck injury, David Sims, Mark Mapletoft, Scott Benton and Kingsley Jones, who was signed recently from Ebbw Vale.

Toulouse, and Franck Tournaire, their France prop forward who was involved in an unsavoury incident after their 19-11 defeat at Ebbw Vale in the European Cup last month, have been fortunate to escape with only a fine and a warning after a European Rugby Cup disciplinary hearing in Dublin.

Toulouse, the 1996 champions, were fined £2,600, while Tournaire, who jostled with Rob Dickson, one of the touch judges, was severely warned as his future conduct.

Romyridd and Brive, and Llanelli and Pau were all fined heavily last season for violence during their respective European Cup ties. Toulouse play Ulster in the quarter-finals of this year's competition at Ravenhill on Friday.

London Irish have confirmed that they are looking at several ground-sharing options if they move from Sunbury. Stamford Bridge is the latest possibility after discussions with Oxford United about sharing their new Minchery Farm Stadium.

Aaron Hops, the New Zealand loose forward, has died in a scuba-diving accident near Auckland. Hops, 27, played four times for the All Blacks during their tour of Britain last year, but never won a full cap.

leicester must do without Stransky

SNOOKER Lee has his house in order

FROM PHIL YATES IN BINGEN

STEPHEN LEE, winner of the Grand Prix in October, and Marco Fu, the beaten finalist, have experienced radically contrasting fortunes this week. Lee oozed confidence here yesterday, while Fu's hopes of providing a gold medal for Hong Kong in the Asian Games were extinguished in Thailand.

Ooi Chin Kay, of Malaysia, surprisingly defeated Fu 5-3 in the last 16 of the individual snooker event at the Asian Games, but Lee was in outstanding form during a 5-1 victory over Anthony Hamilton to reach the quarter-finals of the German Masters.

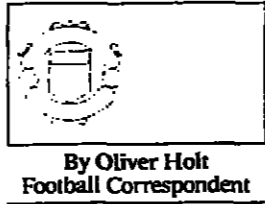
Hamilton constructed a 123 break in the third frame but Lee otherwise controlled the exchanges impressively to earn a meeting with Ken Doherty tomorrow. Lee, 24, has recently moved into a new house near the family home in Trowbridge and believes it has helped his game. "What with all the decorating and rearranging, I haven't had all that much time to concentrate on snooker lately," he said. "Sometimes that isn't a bad thing because it releases a bit of pressure and makes you relax."

Lee certainly looked focused. Countless reds from distance hit the target and his positional play was of the highest order. After leading 3-1 at the mid-session interval, Lee completed his third victory over Hamilton in as many professional tournament meetings between the two players.

Champions' League: Ferguson believes his free-scoring team can see off Bayern Munich

Optimistic United will leave nothing to chance

ROADWORKS had slowed the traffic going into Manchester to the most pathetic of crawls. Driving rain bounced up off the M60 and in Stretford a few bedraggled Christmas shoppers steamed up the windows as they sheltered in the Arndale Centre. Two miles down the road at Old Trafford, though, Alex Ferguson sat cocooned in a micro-climate: all he could talk about were sunshine and goals.



By Oliver Holt Football Correspondent

The Manchester United manager is often at his most amicably optimistic before big European nights at Old Trafford. There was no hint of apprehension or gloom in his thoughts as he anticipated the need to beat Bayern Munich tonight to be sure of progressing to the quarter-finals of the European Cup.

Instead, he flicked happily through his file of memories of United's Champions' League campaign and the results that have allowed them to peer out over the precipice and see life after the so-called "group of death" that saw them drawn alongside Bayern and Borussia Dortmund.

However, both in Ferguson and his players, an intoxicating mood of liberation is circulating. There is a determination to be true to their attacking selves, to give it everything against Bayern. Despite the

labyrinthine rules of the Champions' League, the United manager knows that a draw should be enough to get his team through to the last eight, barring freak results in Turin and Bilbao. But still they will go for the win.

Ferguson also pointed out that Bayern are likely to make the quarter-finals themselves, even if they lose. The coach of the German champions, Ottmar Hitzfeld, though, will be encouraged by his own memories of his last visit to Manchester, when he masterminded Dortmund's 2-0 aggregate victory in the semi-final.

"I don't think Bayern will be killing themselves to beat us," Ferguson said. "They will defend a bit deeper than Barcelona did at the Nou Camp a fortnight ago, that's for sure. I don't think they will try to be too positive. That's my feeling. I hope I'm wrong."

"We have scored more than 50 goals this season and we are probably as strong going forward as we have ever had been at this club while I have been in charge. Figures like that tell you a lot, but they have got experience and a record of efficiency in games like this and we have to be a little bit cautious."

"We have lost early goals in a lot of big games and I am sure Mr Hitzfeld will be remembering his last visit here, when Dortmund got a goal after five minutes. It is not a case of alarm bells ringing for us, but we must not let that happen again because that would be a killer."



Ferguson was in confident mood as he prepared for Manchester United's decisive match at Old Trafford tonight

to be a group of death and that it was unlikely that two clubs would get through, but that way seems it will not be that way now. I'm looking forward to the game. It is games like this that are all part of the continuing challenge of football be-

cause you get nervous but you get excited, too. The players are quite relaxed, but they have got butterflies. We all get them."

Part of the reason for Ferguson's optimism is the fact that he has a full squad of fit players to pick from at last. That, crucially, means that Ryan Giggs, who missed several games because of a broken bone in his foot but played in the Worthington Cup defeat away to Tottenham Hotspur last Wednesday and for the second half of the FA Carling Premiership game against Aston Villa on Saturday, will almost

certainly return on the left side of midfield in place of Jesper Blomqvist. His pace and incision and the crosses of David Beckham will be vital as United try to break down the Bayern defence, which will be keen to avoid the mistakes it committed in the 2-2 draw in the Olympic Stadium at the end of September. Lothar Matthäus, the veteran sweeper, in particular has some bad memories to banish.

Hitzfeld suggested at the weekend that his previous experience of playing United in this competition had sug-

gested to him that Ferguson and his team wanted to win the European Cup so badly that they froze when it really mattered. Not even that could disturb the United manager's poise. "We froze so much we made about 15 chances that night," Ferguson said with a smile. "I hate to think what'll happen if we relax."

TELEVISION: ITV, from 7.30pm

All-out attack offers best way forward

Gary Neville says playing for a draw is not an option if his club are to qualify



Last season we went out of the European Cup when AS Monaco drew the second leg of our quarter-final 1-1 at Old Trafford. The first leg had been a goalless draw, and, at the time, we thought that was a good result, but you will not see a Manchester United team playing like that when we face Bayern Munich tonight.

That performance in Monaco was a product of the fact that we had been caught by a goal against the run of play against Borussia Dortmund in Germany the year before. We were all determined that it was not going to happen again. The result was that we did not create enough and when Monaco scored an early goal at Old Trafford, we were in trouble.

It is not that we have said "to hell with caution" in our Champions' League ties this season. We still respect our opponents and do everything we can to counter their strengths and stifle their threats. As a defender, you want to get a clean sheet every time.

But there has been the kind of positive relaxation that comes with experience. You can see that in the number of goals we have scored in our group games, and, as we prepare to face Bayern tonight, we know that if we are going to go out, we are going to go out our way, not a way that is foreign to us.

We have been too wary of teams like Monaco in the past. Let them change their game for us. Our strength is our attacking football and Munich know that we will be coming at them for the entire 90 minutes and that we will not let up.

We would be unlucky not to make it into the quarter-finals if we draw tonight, but we are not thinking about anything other than a win. The players haven't really discussed all the mathematical niceties, although we know that it will take Rosenborg to win away to Juventus and Galatasaray to win in Bilbao to put us out if we only get a point.

All we can look at is winning the game. We have to treat it like a cup final and the atmosphere will certainly be there to make it seem like one. Manchester United, from top to bottom, cannot play for a draw. We would be hopeless at it. We have not got the mentality to sit 11 players behind the ball like the Italians or the Germans might do.

I don't think that is the English way, never mind the Manchester United way. Hopefully, we can produce the quality to go with all the hard work and we have to maintain our concentration defensively.

But our strength is in our attacking. Of course, we have to be wary of what teams such as Bayern can do. It is rumoured down your throat all the time that the Germans can always get the right result when they need it. They never seem to put in magnificent performances, but they always do just enough to beat us.

It was like that against Dortmund. We came out of that semi-final not knowing how we had not won it. I cannot remember a game in which we had so many chances and dominated so much and still ended up losing. We all thought that Juventus would walk all over them in the final, but then they produced a performance that stunned everybody to win it.

We know that even if we go 1-0 up or 2-0 up tonight, Bayern are not going to fold. They are going to keep going to the end, just like they did earlier in this season when they got a last-minute equaliser against us in the Olympic Stadium. They have the mental strength to stick at it and that is something we respect.

Some people have said that it has become such a big thing for United to win the European Cup that there is too much pressure on us in games like tonight, but I don't agree with that. The pressure and the expectation comes from the sort of performances we have put in against teams such as Juventus, FC Porto and Barcelona in the past couple of years.

All those clubs have acknowledged the fact that they feel we are as good as any team in Europe. When we score three against Barcelona, people say "what a team the are", and that creates an expectation. In my opinion, we have been the most entertaining team in the Champions' League for two or three seasons. If we produce that kind of entertainment tonight, we will be in the draw for the quarter-finals.

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Assured Germans could pose potent threat



Hitzfeld: confident

THEIR arrival in the gloomiest of conditions, was delayed yesterday, but that did not alter the serenity emanating from the Bayern Munich party. The waiting press corps was offered refreshments at the club's expense and, once the coaches had pulled into the Manchester Golf and Country Club, their home for the brief visit, autograph-hunters were obliged before the coach, Ottmar Hitzfeld, and two of their senior professionals, Lothar Matthäus and Oliver Kahn, talked diplomatically about the deciding Champions' League qualifying match against Manchester United tonight.

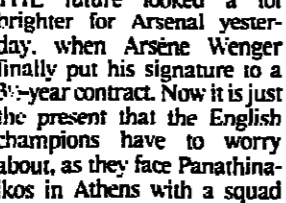
There is no doubt that Bayern possess the mental fortitude to break United's hearts tonight. With their ability to counter-attack they can pierce United's suspect defence when they are at their most vulnerable. One point will be sufficient to earn Bayern a berth in the quarter-finals, but Hitzfeld said: "We know we can win this match, and then there will be no doubt that we deserve to be one of the favourites for the tournament. We

have respect for each of United's players, but my players will have no fear. We have concentrated mainly on ourselves, knowing that, after the bad start we had to the group [they surprisingly lost to Borussia Dortmund], it would be a little sensation if we went through as winners." Apart from the absence of two fringe squad members, Mehmet Scholl and Ali Daei, Hitzfeld will choose his strongest line-up, a system that relies heavily on the presence of Matthäus and Stefan Effenberg in midfield. Hitzfeld, who was in charge of the Borussia Dortmund side that knocked United out of the semi-final of the 1996-97 European Cup, said: "United

are a better side than the one I faced with Dortmund, but this Bayern team is more powerful and threatening than Dortmund were. "United tried too hard against Dortmund, and I do not know if they will suffer from the same mistake again tonight. They are able to play modern football now."

The visitors have not won the European Cup since 1976, while United's search for the Holy Grail dates back to 1968. Matthäus, who remembers the triumph of Sir Matt Busby's team, declared yesterday that United could go all the way again this season, simply because they indulge in "ninety minutes of fighting". He omitted to acknowledge that that could also prove their undoing.

Wenger signs up in hope of enjoying better days



From Matt Dickinson in Athens

THE future looked a lot brighter for Arsenal yesterday, when Arsène Wenger finally put his signature to a 3½-year contract. Now it is just the present that the English champions have to worry about, as they face Panathinaikos in Athens with a squad that would not do justice to the Worthington Cup, never mind the Champions' League.

It has been a hugely unfulfilling European campaign by Wenger's team, a feeling likely to be compounded by defeat tonight, but the Frenchman's decision to commit himself to Highbury until 2002 will ensure that plans can be hatched for a drastic improvement. Whatever the grumbles about his failure to strengthen his squad this summer, by winning the Double last year Wenger proved himself a manager of rare distinction and Barcelona, Real Madrid, the Japanese football federation and countless other clubs and countries were queuing up with blank cheques for his services. All the speculation was ended yesterday when the Frenchman signed a long-term deal and Arsenal will be relieved that his commitment will have thwarted the Foot-

ball Association's hopes of luring him after the European championship in 2000. Wenger insisted yesterday that there were no get-out clauses - "I don't accept them for players, so why should I have any?" - and he will earn enough between now and 2002 to be able to achieve his ambition of moving to boardroom level. "I see myself as a managing director or a president," he said. "In England it isn't possible, but it is in France."

Before then, though, comes the task of building Arsenal into a force in Europe, something that Wenger achieved when he was manager of AS Monaco. "That means keeping in the top three or four in the Premier League for a long period first," he said. "Then, when we have that consistency, it should be possible to do better in the Champions' League."

This campaign is heading for a sorry conclusion. With only two of the regular first team likely to start the match because of Martin Keown's lingering groin injury, Arsenal's ambition is nothing more than to escape a hiding and they have not been helped by the fact that Panathinaikos can still qualify from group E if Lens and Dynamo Kiev draw.

When Panathinaikos surrendered a two-goal lead to lose 4-2 to Olympiakos at the weekend, it sparked a riot. Arsenal, already out of the qualification equations, are inent only on damage limitation.

Time to transfer potential into reality

THE encounter at Old Trafford tonight is the most important involving an English club in Europe since the Heysel Stadium tragedy in Brussels in 1985. That night ended English domination of the European Cup, but tonight could herald a new era because, if they qualify for the quarter-finals, Manchester United have the ability to go all the way. If they fail, we could begin to question the very basis of English clubs buying so readily from abroad.

United have been beyond this stage before, reaching the semi-finals of the Champions' League two years ago. But they lacked the quality required to win the tournament. This season is different because they have improved and there is no omnipotent team on the Continent. The giants of Italy, Spain and Germany are just as tired and hindered by injury as anyone else in the wake of a demanding

World Cup summer. United, having strengthened their team by spending £27 million on Jaap Stam, Jesper Blomqvist and Dwight Yorke, have bridged the gulf in technique and in know-how that, hitherto, they have lacked in Alex Ferguson's reign. But in Italy there is disarray and dilution at Juventus and Internazionale.

Juventus have an injury epidemic and a stagnation in style that has rendered them incapable of winning one of their five European games. Internazionale, hampered by injuries to Ronaldo and Roberto Baggio, pressed the panic button last month when they sacked Gigi Simoni, their experienced coach.

So Italy, which has produced a European Cup final-

ist for the past seven years, has enormous self-doubt. Real Madrid, the worthy champions in May, won the World Club Cup in Tokyo last week - yet they lack consistency.

Dynamo Kiev have the quality to win the tournament. But this is deep mid-winter in Ukraine and, not for the first time, Kiev are contemplating selling off their best players, regardless of whether they qualify for the quarter-finals or not. The club has already agreed a £4 million offer from Liverpool for Olexander Holovko, the swift and powerful defender.

And Bayern Munich? One wonders whether, at the age of nearly 38, their captain and libero is the authentic Lothar Matthäus, or Lothar Mathuse- lah? There are players at Munich who appear past their play-by-date. United are the very opposite - they have the youth as well as the speed and the goalscoring potency to strike in a year when Europe is so susceptible.

But they have to win, or at least draw tonight, if they are to proceed farther and, at the

seemingly working for all of the back four at United, yet on other occasions the relentless pace of the English game has made him look slow and vulnerable.

If Stam can orchestrate the United defence tonight, helping his team over the hurdle of European qualification, then even the large sum paid for him could be recouped. It's not, might we judge his presence to be blocking the progress of John Curtis, or other fledgling United players?

United can always procure enough home-grown talents to challenge for the domestic honours.

But if the club continue to be competitive at home, but out of their depth abroad, then why would the business of importing at such expense be worthwhile? Ferguson could win the Premiership at a tenth of the cost; he cannot go on failing on the Continent.

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GROUP E

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Dynamo Kiev, Lens, Panathinaikos, Arsenal.

GROUP D

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Bayern Munich, Manchester Utd, Barcelona, Borussia.

GROUP A

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Olympiakos, Croatia Zagreb, Ajax, FC Porto.

GROUP B

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Rosenborg, Galatasaray, Juventus, Athletic Bilbao.

GROUP C

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Internazionale, Real Madrid, PSV Eindhoven, Sturm Graz.

GROUP F

Table with 11 columns: P, W, D, L, F, A, Pts. Rows: Holslerlautern, Benfica, PSV Eindhoven, HJK Helsinki.

Villa's three wise men provide shining example

FOOTBALL

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

ON THE evening when the Champions League concludes its group stages, with Manchester United doing battle against Bayern Munich at Old Trafford and Arsenal manning the ramparts against Panathinaikos in Greece, it is appropriate that Chelsea and Aston Villa should meet at Stamford Bridge. When the dust settles in the FA Carling Premiership in May, they, too, could be contemplating a campaign among the European elite.

TOP OF TABLE

| Team | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|---------------|----|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| A Villa | 15 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 25 | 13 | 30 |
| Man Utd | 15 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 21 | 17 | 29 |
| Leeds | 15 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 26 | 14 | 26 |
| Arsenal | 15 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 22 | 15 | 24 |
| West Ham | 15 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 22 | 7 | 26 |
| Chelsea | 14 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 22 | 13 | 25 |
| Middlesbrough | 15 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 26 | 19 | 24 |
| Wolves | 15 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 22 | 21 | 22 |
| Liverpool | 15 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 22 | 21 | 22 |
| Derby | 15 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 15 | 21 | 22 |

line-ups and a high level of motivation, should make for an engrossing spectacle.

Which will depend on the discipline of the respective sides, with Villa holding a clear edge as the season nears its halfway mark. They have collected only 24 bookings and one sending-off — the second-best record in the Premiership — while Chelsea have 38 cau-

and is threatening to undermine the efforts of his teammates as they chase success on three fronts — the Premiership, FA Cup and Cup Winners' Cup.

Although inspirational at times, his act is becoming increasingly erratic and tiresome. Quiet words from Gianluca Vialli, the Chelsea player-manager, appear to have had little effect and it might not be long before his first-team place is in jeopardy. Through available tonight, he will shortly begin a third suspension this season.

John Gregory, the Villa manager, has placed great emphasis on discipline, especially among his defensive cordon of Ugo Ehiogu, Gareth Southgate and Gareth Barry. They have picked up only four bookings between them in the Premiership and it was a point that Steve Harrison, Gregory's assistant, was keen to emphasise yesterday.

"Nowadays, you have to be able to defend with skill," Harrison said. "Defenders should stay on their feet. If they go to ground too quickly, it wastes a lot of energy when they have to get up and chase back. With the pace of the modern game, it's often too late, anyway. The two Gareths like to play their way out of trouble rather than tackle and we've always encouraged that."

Gregory, an ebullient character, has kept a low profile of late. Harrison dealt with press inquiries after the 1-1 draw against Manchester United on Saturday and did so again yesterday. When asked if Julian Joachim, who has scored three goals in two matches, would retain his place ahead of the fit-again Stan Collymore, Harrison replied: "I don't know. You'd better ask the manager."

Not entirely helpful, but Joachim is expected to play, as is Dan Petrescu, the Chelsea defender, who started a league game for only the fourth time this season against Everton.



Warm welcome: Leeds fans show their approval as the manager, O'Leary, brings Batty back to Elland Road

Home, sweet home for Batty

By GEORGE CAULKIN

WEEPY moments and sleepless nights are not what one expects from such a combative character, but then this is very much the new Leeds United. With those starting revelations safely behind him, David Batty returned quickly to type yesterday, aiming a rugged clenched-fist salute to the 600 supporters huddled inside Elland Road as he made a triumphant return to his home-town club.

Batty accepted a contract lasting 4½ years, becoming David O'Leary's first signing

completed his £4.4-million transfer from Newcastle United, bringing to a close a traumatic few days in the England midfield players' life.

"I thought Newcastle were asking too much for me and I wasn't sleeping," he said. "If I'm not enjoying my football it affects me in other ways, so I'm glad common sense prevailed."

Batty accepted a contract lasting 4½ years, becoming David O'Leary's first signing

as Leeds manager. The two played together for three league matches before Batty departed to Blackburn Rovers in October 1993. "I don't think he should have been allowed to leave the club in the first place," O'Leary said.

For Batty, there was simply relief that he was back at the club he first joined as a trainee in 1987. "I tried to be honest with Newcastle, though it was very frustrating last week. I wouldn't have left them for

any other club, but it has been an open secret that I wanted to come back to Leeds."

Batty will sport the No 23 on his back, fittingly facing Coventry City and his former team-mates, Gordon Strachan and Gary McAllister, on Monday. Third place in the table, a side packed with promising young talent and the return of a hero: it was left to the chairman, Peter Ridsdale, to provide a suitably hyperbolic flourish. "The world had better watch out for Leeds United," he said.

A disastrous run that brought just one win in 16 league games reached its nadir last Saturday with the 4-0 rout by Kilmarnock.

Stewart Milne, the Aberdeen chairman, said: "We appreciate it's vitally important that we get the next appointment right."

Alex McLeish, the manager of Hibernian, and Mark McGhee, jobless since leaving Wolverhampton Wanderers, have both been linked with the vacant post.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Pakistan put their faith in Sohail

CRICKET: Aamir Sohail will remain as Pakistan captain for the remaining two Test matches against Zimbabwe despite the furore in the country after the shock seven-wicket defeat in the first Test.

The Pakistan Cricket Board voted 9-3 to keep Sohail in charge despite the barrage of criticism from the public and media since Zimbabwe won in Peshawar last month — their first overseas Test triumph.

The second Test starts in Lahore tomorrow and the final Test begins in Rawalpindi on December 17.

ROWING: Thames RC have announced that they have employed Miles Forbes-Thomas to coach up-and-coming women international rowers. Although funded by Thames, the proposed programme is open to members of other clubs. Thames have played a leading role in women's rowing, producing, amongst others, the Batten sisters.

CURLING: The England women's team, led by Joan Reed, of Berwick ice rink, enjoyed their first success at the European championships in Switzerland when they beat Czechoslovakia 8-0 in the fourth round. However, it has been a disappointing championship for both England teams and the Wales men's team, who hope to break their duck against Luxembourg in the last round.

ICE HOCKEY: Jim Fuyarkuk, the London Knights coach, has been fined £250 and banned for two matches after making an "unauthorised visit" to the officials' room during a match against Cardiff Devils on December 1. In a separate ruling, Mike Blaisdell, the Nottingham Panthers coach, has been fined £250 and banned from any involvement in the Superleague match against Bracknell Bees.

SEVEN members of the Casino team are being questioned by French authorities investigating the doping scandal that overshadowed the Tour de France. Police from Lille, where Patrick Keil, the judge, is investigating doping at the disgraced Festina team, travelled to Lyon to question the cyclists.

GOLF: George Macgregor, the former Walker Cup captain and chairman of selectors, will captain Scotland for the next two seasons. Macgregor, 54, played in five Walker Cups between 1971 and 1987 and won 60 Scottish caps. His term as chairman of selectors ended with Britain and Ireland winning the world team title in Chile last month.

England should have three representatives in an expanded Champions League next season, perhaps four if United gain the desired result against Bayern and then go on to win the European Cup. When the domestic prizes are handed out in five months, Villa, the Premiership leaders, and Chelsea, who lie in sixth place, are likely to have qualified alongside United.

Tonight offers a chance for them to lay bare their true credentials, unlike the sham of six weeks ago, when Chelsea reserves defeated Villa reserves 4-1 in the third round of the Worthington Cup. The performances counted for little, the result even less, but the renewal of combat, with Premiership points at stake, strong

and three dismissals, the third-worst. In an expected frenetic atmosphere at the Bridge, cool heads will be called for.

None more so than Dennis Wise, the Chelsea captain, who was sent off for the third time this season in the 0-0 draw against Everton at Goodison Park on Saturday.

Wise, one of the few Englishmen in the club's vast foreign legion, is becoming a liability

Forest in need of a fairytale ending

By RICHARD HOBSON

TEAMS under Dave Bassett have rarely been pretty, but an absence of style and finesse has been compensated for by determination and endeavour. At the moment, his Nottingham Forest side are lacking in all areas and unless Bassett can imbue the squad with the spirit he fostered at Wimbledon and Sheffield United, their stay in the FA Carling Premiership is likely to be short.

Clearly losing patience, Bassett made the most critical assessment of the Forest side in his 19 months as manager after a 3-2 defeat against Sheffield Wednesday on Monday night. For the first time this season he admitted that they "played like a relegation team".

Had Forest converted one of

many chances in the final 15 minutes to salvage a draw at Hillsborough, the result would have given a false impression of an abject performance. Bassett even accused his players of being involved in "a game of fairies" in the first half.

"This is a big test for the players now," Bassett said yesterday. "Only they can find the answers. I am no magician and no genius. If we do not win games this month then it is going to be difficult. It is about pace and bottle — at the moment they are not showing either."

"They have to wake up to the reality that we have 11 points from 16 games, which is nowhere near

enough." The winless run stretches to 13 games and the next two home fixtures pit them against Blackburn Rovers and Southampton, both also in the relegation zone. On Saturday they visit Leicester City.

Just seven days before the Hillsborough debacle, Bassett stood up at the annual meeting to support the defence, which most present appeared to blame for the predicament. Against Wednesday, the back three of Heide, Chettle and Armstrong could hardly have been more culpable, well though Benito Carbone took his two goals. The side needs improving, but until somebody offers £5 million for Pierre Van Hooijdonk, Bassett's hands are tied.

Miller pays with job for Aberdeen failure



Bassett: losing patience

ABERDEEN, the Scottish Premier League's bottom club, must yet again embark on a search for a new manager after Alex Miller resigned yesterday (Phil Gordon writes).

Miller, 49, becomes the fourth manager to leave the club in six years and, though the decision was reached by "mutual agreement", the taciturn manner at the Pittodrie press conference indicated that he was pushed — and not that he had jumped.

Whereas Aberdeen knew only success in the 1980s, under Alex Ferguson, who led them to three championships, four Scottish Cups, a Cup Winners' Cup and the Europe-

an Super Cup, this has been the decade of failure and Alex Smith, Willie Miller and Roy Aitken have all paid the price for a lack of success.

A disastrous run that brought just one win in 16 league games reached its nadir last Saturday with the 4-0 rout by Kilmarnock.

Stewart Milne, the Aberdeen chairman, said: "We appreciate it's vitally important that we get the next appointment right."

Alex McLeish, the manager of Hibernian, and Mark McGhee, jobless since leaving Wolverhampton Wanderers, have both been linked with the vacant post.

Sales come early at Portsmouth

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

MARTIN GREGORY, the chairman of Portsmouth, is planning to sell players at knockdown prices to save the team from financial ruin, it was reported yesterday.

Gregory is said to have drawn up a "bargain price list" of his squad to be circulated to every club in the country. At the weekend, he spent 48 hours discussing a takeover deal with the businessmen, Vince Wolanin and Brian Howe, but the American-based pair flew home yesterday with the future of the club still uncertain.

Alan Ball, the Portsmouth manager, is said to be standing firm by the players, who have been angered by the news that Gregory is planning to sell them off.

After a meeting with Peter Hinkinson, a club director, yesterday, Ball said: "The chairman has got to tell the people exactly what is going on. I've insisted that he makes a statement. It's all very well hearing rumours about this and that, but he's got to tell people why I've been told to sell players. He's got to tell people the extent of the problems."

"One thing is for sure — I'm having no part in selling off this team to pay off debts. He says we have to sell players and I disagree with that and have told him so."

"I don't know where he will get the money from unless he gets a mass injection of cash from somewhere. I've got a four-year contract and I'm planning to see it out. I will work hard in my job to prepare the players for their game against Grimsby on Sunday. I'm not going anywhere."

Adrian Whitbread, the Portsmouth captain, met senior players yesterday and later released a press statement to a local newspaper. "We all got together and decided that we didn't want to go and we wanted to remain here and be loyal to the supporters who have been loyal to us all season. The manager doesn't want to sell anybody and we don't want to go," Whitbread said.

Gustavo Di Lella, Hartlepool's Argentinian defender, has been fined a maximum two weeks' wages by the club after admitting his part in the post-match brawl with the Fulham defender, Simon Morgan, at Craven Cottage on Saturday.

Di Lella claimed that Morgan stamped on him during the closing stages of the FA Cup match, which Fulham won 4-2, and he had to leave the field feeling "very dazed".

Maurice Smith, the Hartlepool club secretary, said: "He has been warned with regards to his future conduct."

FOR THE RECORD

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NFL): Tampa Bay 24 Green Bay 22

CRICKET

TOUR MATCH: MAHER, New Zealand (10.43) vs. D. D. (15.47); A. D. (16.11) vs. S. E. (16.11); N. P. (16.11) vs. C. M. (16.11); S. J. (16.11) vs. J. (16.11); S. J. (16.11) vs. J. (16.11)

FOOTBALL

Uefa Cup: Third round, second-leg. PAISLEY 0-3 RANGERS (11-1) Bello 47, Albion 28, 17,000

Chelsea 88 pen Sent off: S. Ponnin (Rangers), 45 Penalties won 4-2 on aggregate

Monday's late results FA Carling Premiership: SHEFF WED (11-3) NOTT F. (0-2) Aldershot 2-2 Bolton 2-2 Van Hooijdonk 7-1

Bottom of table: Shell Wed. 15 4 7 17 17 19 Everton 15 4 7 10 10 15 19

Derby 15 4 7 10 10 15 19 Coventry 15 4 3 14 23 15 Blackburn 15 3 3 10 15 24 12

Nottm F. 15 2 5 14 27 11 Southampton 15 2 4 10 12 30 10

Football Conference: HEDNESFORD (0) 1 TELFORD (0) 1 Hayward 51 Murphy 56

Sent off: M. Bywater (Telford), 77

DR MARTENS LEAGUE: Premier division: Weymouth 5 Gloucester 3, Worcester 0 Brent 3 Southern division: Chesham 3 Atherton 3; Dartford 1; Sittingbourne 1

THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE YOUTH ALLIANCE: North West Combination: Wigan 1 Chester 3

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First division: Chelsea 1 Queens Park Rangers 0; Millwall 1; Swindon 3

PONTING'S LEAGUE: Premier division: Stockport 1 Sunderland 1; Leicester 3; Derby 2

FA YOUNG PLAYERS' TROPHY: Second-round replay: Lincoln 2 Kidderminster 1

NORTH WESTERN TRAINS LEAGUE: Floodlit trophy: Second round: Coltrane 7; Chesham 2

ARGENTINE LEAGUE: Ferro Carril Oeste 1; Argentina Juniors 1

GOLF

World rankings: 1, T. Woods (US) 12.30; 2, M. O'Connell (US) 10.43; 3, D. D. (US) 9.67; 4, D. L. (US) 9.42; 5, E. E. (SA) 9.16; 6, N. P. (2nd) 8.97; 7, C. M. (Spain) 8.91; 8, L. W. (US) 8.86; 9, V. Singh (IN) 8.51; 10, P. M. (US) 7.76

World Cup Standings (after five events): 1, Schmidt (Ger) 480 pts; 2, Ahnhan (Fin) 372; 3, Furukawa (Jpn) 350; 4, K. (Jpn) 320; 5, H. (Jpn) 292; 6, W. (Jpn) 288; 7, M. (Jpn) 288; 8, S. (Jpn) 288; 9, S. (Jpn) 288; 10, N. (Jpn) 288

World Cup Standings (after two rounds): 1, F. (Fin) 150 pts; 2, P. (Fin) 140; 3, S. (Fin) 130; 4, S. (Fin) 120; 5, S. (Fin) 110; 6, S. (Fin) 100

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SKING

PREDAZZO, Italy: World Cup K120 hill jumps: 1, M. Schmitz (Ger) 253.7 points; 2, K. Furek (Jpn) 250; 3, N. K. (Jpn) 248.8; 4, K. Yoshino (Jpn) 225; 5, L. Ottosson (Nor) 222.6; 6, M. Hara (Jpn) 220.1; 7, M. Aoyama (Nor) 220.1; 8, J. J. (Jpn) 220.1; 9, S. Harwood (Ger) 217; 10, A. G. (Austria) 214.8

World Cup Standings (after five events): 1, Schmidt (Ger) 480 pts; 2, Ahnhan (Fin) 372; 3, Furukawa (Jpn) 350; 4, K. (Jpn) 320; 5, H. (Jpn) 292; 6, W. (Jpn) 288; 7, M. (Jpn) 288; 8, S. (Jpn) 288; 9, S. (Jpn) 288; 10, N. (Jpn) 288

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RUGBY UNION 42

Cambridge storm to fifth successive Varsity triumph

THE making of history would have been a fringe benefit. No Scottish club has won a match in Italy but, when they led 1-0, it seemed that Rangers would not only chalk up that achievement but also defeat the favourites for the Uefa Cup to advance to the quarter-finals. Then, they collapsed into a stereotype.

The self-destructiveness was recognisably Scottish in its inexplicable nature. It was, however, ironic that the men at fault should have been Italians. It has been imagined that recruiting foreign players will graft onto British teams a self-discipline that has been lacking. Sergio Porrini and Lorenzo Amoruso dispelled that theory by acting as recklessly as anyone who has been born within the environs of Ibrox.

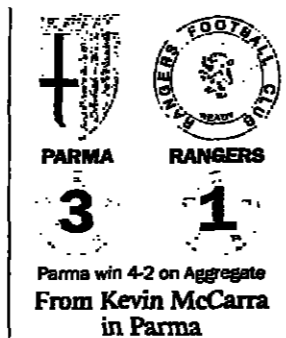
A minute of the first half remained and Rangers were holding a lead with a degree of comfort when Porrini committed two bookable offences within the space of a few moments, bringing down the stylish Verón with a late tackle to

Confident United 44
Wenger signs up 44
Villa's wise men 45

earn the latter yellow card that saw him sent off. Faced with that disadvantage, Rangers were unable to retain a firm hold of their composure and Parma equalised in the 48th minute.

Dick Advocaat's team were then to fall 2-1 behind, but still had some cause to believe that they could prevail. Had they pulled level, Rangers would have been in a position to win the tie on away goals. That ambition was taken beyond their reach by a further act of folly.

In the 67th minute, Verón sent a pass towards Chiesa on the right of the penalty area. Had the forward taken possession he would only have been positioned near the byline, angled away from goal. Despite that lack of ostensible threat, Amoruso thrust out an arm to fist the ball away. It was an action so bizarre that it was difficult to believe that it had actually taken place.



Parma win 4-2 on Aggregate From Kevin McCarra in Parma

The referee knew there had been no miracle. He awarded a penalty, which Chiesa converted. Recently, there has been speculation that Juventus will bid for Amoruso. After his aberration, however, he had better reconcile himself to another Christmas in Glasgow.

For their part, Rangers will have to consider whether they can afford to keep him in the team. Advocaat, a stubborn man, had previously made the Italian his captain, despite the reservations and complaints of the crowd. After this defeat, he insisted that Amoruso had been "excellent". Nonetheless, away from the microphone, Advocaat will find it much more difficult to make a case for the centre half's inclusion.

The folly yesterday was all the more galling because Rangers had, in other respects, shown maturity. There were spells in the first half in which they were apparent masters of the tie.

The Serie A club may have been suffering from ambivalence. After drawing 1-1 in Glasgow, they knew that at the Stadio Tardini would steer them safely through and they may have lacked urgency as a result. Rangers, in the 24th minute, forced them to sharpen their concentration. Sensini misdirected a pass to Albertz and the midfield player strode towards the penalty area, struggling to recover, and fired a drive into the corner of the net.

It had been thought that the German might have been left on the substitutes' bench, since Ian Ferguson was introduced to midfield to mark Verón. In the event, Advocaat recognised that a man of Albertz's threat could not be discarded



Barry Ferguson is isolated in his despair as Parma celebrate the equalising goal, scored by Balbo, that set Rangers on the path to elimination from the Uefa Cup yesterday

and Kanchelskis, who had been unwell, was omitted.

Albertz, in common with the rest of the side, seemed to relish this occasion. At one point, soon after he had scored, he delivered a 40-yard pass down the left wing to free Wallace and, at that stage, there were grounds to think that Rangers were poised enough to prey upon the concern that was growing within Parma.

Perhaps one ought to have noticed instead the manner in which Porrini lost his temper after angling with Chiesa in an off-the-ball incident. His questionable temperament was to undermine Rangers. Once he had departed, Verón struck an impeccable cross that Chiesa turned into the path of Balbo for an easy goal.

A quarter of an hour later, a free kick by Verón was partially cleared by Albertz, but Fiore, from 20 yards, dispatched a perfect drive. Amoruso's lapse secured Parma's victory.

Advocaat, on unfathomable grounds, argued that Porrini did not deserve the second yellow card and he also offered praise for Amoruso. "Don't pin the blame on Porrini and Amoruso," he said. The coach is used to having his wishes obeyed, but that is one command that will rightly be ignored.

PARMA (3-4-1-2): G. Gullit - L. Thuram, R. Serrano, F. Carnicero - D. Fuser (sub: R. Muzzi, 86min), D. Baggio, A. Boghossian (sub: S. Forni, 56), A. Soriano - J. Verón - A. Balbo, E. Chiesa (sub: H. Casasco, 74)

Gullit awaits share of the spoils

HAVING frequently railed against the financial restraints placed on his transfer dealings since replacing Kenny Dalglish as manager of Newcastle United four months ago, Rudi Gullit is set to become the immediate beneficiary of the controversial return by Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall to the club's plc board yesterday.

Newcastle's majority shareholders, who resigned in disgrace after a tabloid exposé last March, are expected to give Gullit the resources to continue his restructuring, which began with the £8 million recruitment of Duncan

and the non-executive directors, John Josephs and Tom Penton, their close ally, the chief executive, Freddie Fletcher, becomes acting chairman.

"With the two leading shareholders back at the top, it means we can react quicker when it comes to signing players," a club source said. Gullit's list of targets is fairly extensive, stretching from the highly regarded Ipswich Town midfielder player, Kieron Dyer, to the Portuguese duo, Rui Costa and Joao Pinto, and Internazionale's Nigeria centre half, Taribo West.

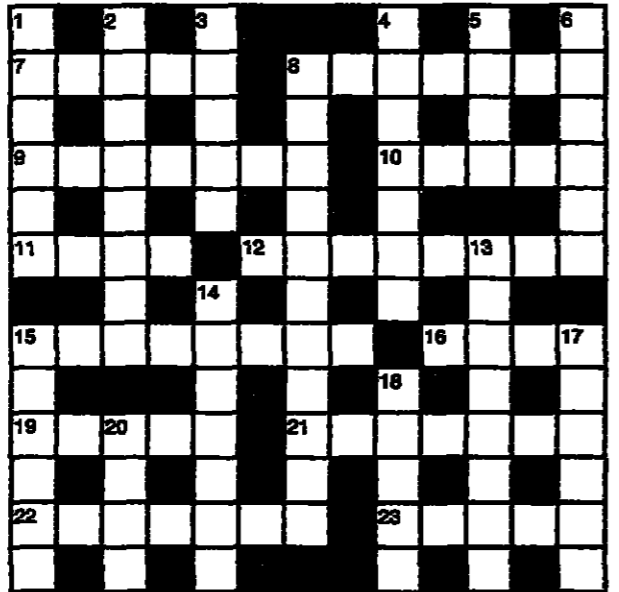
Shepherd and Hall, who between them account for a 65 per cent shareholding, will now have direct control over plc business. Following the resignation of Denis Cassidy

Cassidy quits, page 26



Hall: Back on board

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1584

- ACROSS
7 Fud: crack surface of (5)
8 Vague, insubstantial (7)
9 Boring (7)
10 Circumference (of body) (5)
11 Carry with difficulty: back deformity (4)
12 Perplex (8)
15 Church robbing room (5)
16 Rebuff: blunt (nose) (4)
19 African 'cat', provides perfume (5)
21 Heath, moorland ferns (7)
22 Fried meat in breadcrumbs (7)
23 Heater: smashed (in) (5)
- DOWN
1 Put an end to: a drink (6)
2 Very widespread disease (5)
3 Poison (5)
4 One cheap at the price (7)
5 Sullen, severe (4)
6 Code key: nonentity (6)
8 Easily influenced, yielding (11)
13 One without opinion (in poll) (4-4)
14 Method of speaking (7)
15 (Make) fast (6)
17 Sand trap: fortified shelter (6)
18 He sold soul to Devil (5)
20 Enormous (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1583
ACROSS: 1 Cosmic 4 Smudge 5 Main 9 Near miss
10 Androcles 13 Torre 15 Tiara 16 Junor 18 Autolytus
21 Gullible 22 Cove 23 Nephew 24 Dorset
DOWN: 1 Combat 2 Swindler 3 Cynic 5 Mare's tail
6 Dail 7 Ensure 11 Ostracise 12 Leant 14 Red Cross
16 Jargon 17 Assent 19 Oread 20 Flip

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Australian cover-up reopens cricket bookmaking scandal

FROM ALAN LEE IN MELBOURNE

THE pride and image so dear to Australian cricket sustained serious bruising last night when it was revealed that Shane Warne and Mark Waugh, two of its favourite sons, were disciplined by their own authorities in 1995 for dealing with an illegal Indian bookmaker. In the week when judgment is expected in the Lahore High Court on alleged bribery and match-fixing by Pakistani players, accusations brought in part by the same two Australians, the timing is devastating and the repercussions are likely to be immeasurable.

Salim Malik, the central figure in the protracted and combustible Pakistani affair, was named by Warne and Waugh as the man who offered them money to lose a game, an allegation that Waugh recently repeated in the Lahore court. Malik, and other prominent Pakistani cricketers, are still awaiting a verdict, but it can only be imagined what dirty washing might be aired in the wake of the latest developments.

There is no suggestion that either Warne or Waugh accepted money to try to influence the outcome of a match, or even a personal performance, and so it would appear that both were guilty of being naïve and acquisitive rather than corrupt. Both have continued to play for Australia without suspension and, indeed, been freely promoted as candidates to succeed Mark Taylor as captain. In the present climate, however, their reputations cannot survive unscathed. Late last night here, the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) was mounting a policy of dam-

age limitation, releasing only the facts necessary to comply with a story already leaking. A local radio programme in Melbourne, hosted by David Hookes, the former Test cricketer, issued the initial rumours, pressuring the ACB into a statement.

Beyond confirming that both players will explain themselves at a press conference in

Thorpe bows out 46
Indian gamblers 46

Adelaide today, where Waugh is preparing for the third Test match against England, Mal Speed, the chief executive of the ACB, refused to identify them. "They are two current players, both still prominent members of the Australian team," he said.

As all betting is illegal in India, a fact that would not have been unknown to the players,

would have saved much of the embarrassment and all the ramifications now attendant, for, remarkably, the fines imposed on Waugh and Warne date back to a brief tour of Sri Lanka, made late in 1994.

The Australians visited Sri Lanka on their way to a Test series in Pakistan. It was during their stay in Colombo - ironically, a city where they refused to play during the World Cup of two years later - that Waugh and Warne were apparently approached by a millionaire bookmaker from Madras, in southern India. The proposal was that they should provide information on team selection, weather and pitch conditions for the one-day games before it was generally known, so that the bookmaker could frame his odds on each match and service his clients.

The words were written by Malcolm Conn, of *The Australian*, the newspaper that had been investigating the story. Under the front-page headline, *cricket's betting scandal*, Conn gave the full story of Shane Warne and Mark Waugh's involvement with an Indian bookmaker.

In Pakistan, legal advisers to the country's cricket board (PCB) are concerned that the revelations may have a serious impact on their match-fixing inquiry.

The solicitor in charge of the PCB's investigation, Ali Sibtain Fazli, told *The Australian* that Waugh's evidence was central to the case against Salim Malik. "Waugh is one of only two people to give direct evidence against Salim Malik," Fazli said. "What he told the court is very important."

their foolishness in complying is implicit. It must also be assumed that they were rewarded generously for whatever tips they supplied. Whether they did anything illegal is for others to judge. In cricketing law, they were guilty of plain stupidity, though surely not of the outright corruption of perverting the course of a match for profit. Waugh is a self-confessed gambler on horses and greyhounds; Warne would have attracted such illicit interest by his name alone. Both players, however, would surely feel insulted by any suggestion that their involvement extended beyond the peripheries of any given match.

These events pre-dated all knowledge or suspicion of match-fixing on the sub-continent, and it is significant that cricket betting at that time had not been stigmatised as it has been since. If Malik did subsequently approach Waugh and Warne as alleged, however, it could be surmised that he did so with full awareness of what they had done.

The procedures of the ACB in this episode will doubtless be scrutinised. It appears, however, that one of the players pre-empted any discovery of their wrongdoing by reporting it to the ACB, early in 1995. After secret meetings and inquiries, the two players were fined £4,000, the rest of the Australian squad was warned against such temptations and a report was filed to the International Cricket Council. Nothing, though, was made public and its subsequent untimely discovery will be as bad for the game worldwide as it may be for the individuals.

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